

THE SOCIAL HORIZON




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Opinions of the Press.

"THIS is a really admirable little work. We have read nothing so fresh, so suggestive on the social problem for some time. It is so bright and clear and unconventional that any intelligent person who reads it is likely to think more seriously and more intelligently about that problem than he has done before. To say that a little work of about 160 pages sets one thinking and stirs our better feelings is high praise, and that praise we can unreservedly give to this suggestive little work."—*Daily Chronicle*.

"We have not for a long time read a book which has attracted us more. It is one of those thoughtful works which set the reader thinking, and that in a hopeful and earnest fashion, with a notion that something may evolve itself from the mental labour. It stirs up all one's best ideas and impulses and bears to be read and re-read from end to end."—*Westminster Review*.

"Is of considerable present interest, and deserves to be widely read and digested. A very keen-sighted book, which puts clearly and forcibly what many are vaguely thinking, and what may, with great advantage, be suggested to a far wider circle."—*Economic Review*.

"Rather a curious book, written by the author of 'Life in our Villages.' It is in fact a powerful essay in favour of the principles of Fabian Socialism . . . We may commend this little volume as an original treatise well written and readable. The general line of argument is to point to the facility with which public control might now be attained over great branches of industry."—*Athenæum*.

"A sound argument in favour of the position that, through an irresistible tendency, the small master, the small merchant, and the small dealer, are played out. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the book, is our advice to all readers."—*North British Economist*.

"He discusses with vigour and suggestiveness the forces which are tending in modern England to the extinction of small businesses. He has something which is both wise and wholesome to say in regard to the social elevation of the people."—*Leeds Mercury*.

"The author of 'Life in Our Villages' has given a most enjoyable book in 'The Social Horizon,' which deals with the question of Socialism in a large, broad, and wise fashion. The author is a London journalist of large and various experience, and he tells us what he knows. It is stimulating reading, and no one can read it without feeling the better for it."—*North British Daily Mail*.

The Oxford Chronicle says:—"The book is throughout written in the energetic and graphic style so strikingly displayed in 'Life in Our Villages,' and is destined to occupy a prominent position among the many admirable volumes on social and allied questions which have been published by Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co."

The Christian World, in a leading article on this book, says:—"We may join, therefore, with the writer of the interesting work we have been noting in the belief

that the outcome of the existing social situation will be a forward movement which, while securing to us all of real worth that we now possess, will add new features to human enjoyment, and above all will spread that enjoyment over the whole area of humanity."

The Christian Reader refers to it as "a wonderful little book." "It is the record of the semi-socialistic opinions and experiences of a working journalist of wide experience in London. The reader is not bothered with long-winded disquisitions about 'capital' and 'labour' and their relations, and this has commended the book to many who do not usually spend much time on political economy. But the book is the product of intelligence, trained in the actual, and acquired by a very honest and sympathetically beating heart. . . . This little book is by no means conclusive. It is not a solution, but it is exceedingly useful and suggestive. More than that it is honest."

The Bristol Times says:—"We do not, of course, follow all the writer's conclusions, but he gives sound matter for reflection. . . . The book is fair."

The Graphic (Chicago) says:—"It is one of the strongest books issued in the Social Science Series of the publishers."

The Christian Union (New York) says:—"The unknown author of 'The Social Horizon' appeals as powerfully to the intellect of English readers as Mr. Edward Bellamy appealed to their sympathies. . . . It surely will influence the thought of its readers as much or more than did Mr. Bellamy's brilliant dream. . . . The author has a rare amount of humour, and a still rarer amount of practical good sense, which prevents him from ever getting out of touch with the most conservative and unsympathetic reader."

The London Quarterly Review directs a long article to the discussion of the book, which it severely criticises. The reviewer says:—"For the most part the temper of the host is admirable, and not infrequently he throws out hints which might be taken with advantage by extremists on both sides."

The Hospital (Edited by one of the Secretaries of the Stock Exchange) says:—"It contains keen observations, vivid descriptions, ready and contagious sympathy, the power of impressing the reader. . . . We have dealt at some length with this book because we regard it as a popular utterance of a popular feeling. If we have condemned its schemes as Utopian and its accusations as unjust, we desire nevertheless to express our sympathy with the feeling which inspired it, and the tenderness for the suffering poor which leavens every page."

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MAR 9 1916

EVIL AND EVOLUTION

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE SOCIAL HORIZON"

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES says:—"There has been a great shifting in recent years for the responsibility for evil. It has been shifted from the shoulders of Satan and laid to the arm of God. This is the work of evolution, and the innumerable multitude who accept the theology of Lord Tennyson. But our author would bring the responsibility back. He does not deny the appearance of design in evil. Yet he holds that the only reasonable, as the only possible, explanation of evil is the old one that an enemy hath done it. Now this position is noteworthy, since it belongs to a man who is so conversant with modern ways of thinking. The book is well worth the interest it is almost certain to excite."

THE SCOTTISH GUARDIAN says:—"This book belongs altogether to the unexpected. To find a man of undoubted intellectual power setting solemnly to work to prove the existence of Satan on purely scientific grounds is one of the last things we should have looked for in these days. As he puts it himself in the opening chapter, it is dead contrary to the whole surface-drift of modern thought. . . . That is very startling to most of us. But the book is so able and so earnest, and contains so much which seems to demand one's assent as one goes closely, that it is very well worth reading. Unhappily, the negative part of the argument is (as so often) much stronger than the positive. The chapters in which the author attacks the current explanation of evil in God's universe are distressingly powerful. . . . The book is full of interest and should be read."

THE SCOTSMAN says:—"Under the title *Evil and Evolution* we have a contribution, by an anonymous writer of considerable ability, to the eternal question of the origin of evil. . . . It is, in short, the old Miltonic theory of Satan, only in a scientific instead of a personal guise. The thesis is cleverly argued, and will be read with pleasure by people who enjoy hawking about the unknowable; while it may afford some consolation to those who look with anger on science's inroads upon the belief in His Satanic Majesty."

THE BOOKMAN says it is "a thoughtful attempt to consider the old problem of the existence of evil by the light of the theory of Evolution."

It is intended to be read both by those who accept and those who reject the authority of the Bible on the question."

THE GLASGOW HERALD says:—"Although this essay is a smart and ingenious plea for belief in a personal devil, its value does not consist so much in its apologetics as in its scepticism, and the author's defence of Satanism is really of less importance than his attack on modern Christian explanations of the presence of evil in the universe. His examination of the educational and evolutionary theories of evil, according to which it is good in the making or the absolutely necessary condition of good, is particularly acute, and there is a real dash of originality in his contention that the ends which are supposed to be, and in a few cases actually are, attained by suffering, could have been far more effectively entertained by happiness, and that a sympathy of happiness is a far better thing than a sympathy of suffering. . . . The essay is well worth reading for the vigour with which the writer puts the case against the easy optimism which is rather fashionable just now in theological circles."

THE CHURCH TIMES says:—"All science starts with hypothesis, and that is the triumphant hypothesis which explains or collocates facts which its rivals cannot account for. In this remarkable volume the author endeavours to form a hypothesis which may enable us to put up with the evil of life without impugning the wisdom or goodness of the Creator. He rejects the theory that God is a despot Whose will is law, and Who is not to be questioned if He sees fit to inflict or permit evil. He rejects, too, the explanation that pain is disciplinary, on the ground that for the greater part pain fails in that case to attain its end, and on the further subsidiary ground that science seems to assure us that the province of pain in the lower sentient world is what it is amongst men, and in the former it is not disciplinary. On the other hand, he dismisses in the light of science the traditional teaching that 'God is good, and all that is good in the world is to be ascribed to Him. The Devil is bad, and all that is evil around has to be ascribed to him.' He dismisses this teaching, however, only to restate it. The evolution theory shows that all higher life has sprung from lower, under the resultant influence of delicately-balanced forces. On the borderland where sentient life begins, a 'maladjustment' has been introduced by a malignant being—'a god-like being with creative and administrative powers, with intellectual resources, with knowledge and foreknowledge probably inferior only to those of the Creator Himself, but actuated by malignity instead of goodness.' To him it is due that the balance is disturbed in all sentient life, and that within its sphere, from the lowest to the highest, society has been built upon a basis of selfishness tempered by beneficence, instead of being built upon a basis of beneficence qualified by selfishness. There can be no question about the courage, or the keen logic and the lucid style of this fascinating treatment of a problem which is of pathetic interest to all of us. God meant us to be happy and we are not. A malignant being has spoilt God's wise and loving purposes. That is the author's solution. It deserves to be studied by all, and no one who reads it can fail to be struck by it. It should be added that the author relies for his arguments solely on observation of nature, and not at all on premises of theology."

THE LITERARY GUIDE (Agnostic) says:—"In these days of advanced thought it is a novelty to come across anyone bold enough to

defend, on scientific grounds, so antiquated a thesis as the existence of the Devil. . . . It must be admitted, however, that if earnestness and ability could prove our author's case, he would have little to fear. It is a pleasure to read a book so powerful in grasp, so clear and vigorous in style. . . . In substance the theory is not new, but it is worked out with a really admirable ingenuity. . . . In one respect it is specially deserving of perusal by the Agnostic. In his well-known *Essay on Nature*, John Stuart Mill presented with masterly skill the difficulty of reconciling 'nature red in tooth and claw' with any theory of a purely beneficent Creator. The author of *Evil and Evolution* has expressed the difficulty with perhaps even greater force."

THE METHODIST TIMES, Edited by the Rev. HUGH PRICE HUGHES, M.A., who on five successive Sundays held "Special Conferences" on the subject of the book in St. James's Hall, discusses *Evil and Evolution* in a leading article headed "The Return to Orthodoxy." After commenting on Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*, the writer says:—"The other book to which we refer has only just been published by Macmillan. It is entitled *Evil and Evolution*, and is written by the brilliant author of *The Social Horizon*, one of the most remarkable and satisfactory books on the social question that has ever appeared in print. This volume is an attempt to demonstrate that the only rational and satisfactory explanation of the existence of evil is the oldest and most orthodox of all—namely, the existence of Satan. The gifted author does not quote the Bible from first to last. He argues simply from the point of view of evolutionary science, with which he is fully conversant. He tears to pieces the futile attempts which well-meaning men have made to reconcile the goodness of God with the ruthless cruelty and bloodshed that fill the animal world. . . . This is one of the most remarkable, suggestive and satisfactory books on the problem of evil which it has ever been our good fortune to read. We strongly commend it to all teachers of religion. Like the other volume to which we have referred, it is a startling evidence of the way in which the most gifted and well informed minds of our time, saturated with the results of modern science, are deliberately returning to the scriptural faith of our fathers."

THE INQUIRER (Unitarian), discussing the book at considerable length, says:—"This book is a plea for the Devil; but not in the sense in which a novelist or an essayist might seek to whitewash Nero or rehabilitate the character of Judas Iscariot. The argument is a serious one; and the contention—although we hold that it fails—is ably maintained and not inherently unreasonable."

THE INDEPENDENT says:—"This is a book well written and full of suggestiveness and illuminating side-lights, but it fails to convince the reader of the truth of its central theory. In a sense it may be called an attempt to rehabilitate Satan in his place in human thought, and to explain the condition of the world on the hypothesis of a personal source of all evil. We have of late years grown apologetic in speaking of the Devil, or even sceptical of his existence, in the pulpit as well as out of it. The average mind scarcely knows what to think of the question, and takes refuge in habitual ambiguity of thought and expression. It is one of the strong features in this book that the writer not only faces the reality of evil with courage and determination, but boldly pleads for

the existence of an Evil Spirit. . . . The sum of the matter is that the problem remains where it was, and that which we have read a delightful book, full of stimulus and incidental help, we are no nearer to the final solution of the problem of evil than we were at the start."

THE WESTERN DAILY MERCURY says:—"It is impossible to give this book the go-by. It deals too trenchantly of subjects which not only concern us all, but which often concentrate our most serious and anxious thoughts. The problem of evil in a world which should be 'very good,' the unequal distribution of suffering, the sudden stroke of unmerited disaster, all are staggering alike to the philosopher, the theologian, and the ordinary thinker. But it is safe to say that an approach quite like the present has not been made before. The gifted and brilliant author of *The Social Horizon* approaches *Evil and Evolution* from a philosophic and not from a religious standpoint. His advances are made with unexampled temerity, and it must be conceded that he goes far to make out a good case. He strengthens the knees of many a feeble divine, and he gives the world pause in its all too ready building of new theories upon the discoveries and advances of the geologist, the anatomist, and the philosopher. The effort of the book is the reinstallation of Satan, 'the prince, the chief of many throned powers, that led th' embattled seraphim to war.' Our preachers have been all 'too previous' in relegating that dignitary to myth and shadow. The author now restores his commanding personality, makes him a potent being only next in force to the great Eternal, gives him a far-reaching sinuous sagacity, and a deadly subtle skill, enabling him to impart a fatal 'kink' to the first movements of the protoplasmic creation, a kink which has set all awry ever since, and has 'brought death into the world and all our woe.' The pulpit explanation of evil, the 'fatherly education theory,' are laughed away with indignant scorn, the evolutionary explanation is stoutly enforced, and then we get a glimpse of 'Satan from a scientific point of view,' followed by graphic pictures of 'evolution without maladjustment,' and of 'what might have been.' Come what may, our author's present study must be reckoned with in any future research into the problem of evil. We understand that Mr. Price Hughes is making *Evil and Evolution* the text-book of his Sunday afternoon 'conferences,' and our readers will do well to buy this remarkable book for themselves."

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THE SOCIAL HORIZON

BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"LIFE IN OUR VILLAGES"



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8 Apr. 18 Wm. Lloyd Garrison

PREFACE.



THE writer is not identified, or in any way connected, with any body of Socialists. He states this, not, of course, because he feels that there would be any discredit in such a connection, but because he thinks it possible that some readers may be disposed to give to what he has to say a more impartial and unprejudiced consideration if they know that as a fact.

He is not connected with the Socialists, nor is he conscious of having been in any appreciable degree influenced by Socialist writings; indeed he thinks it more than probable that if those who are familiar with those writings do him the honour of reading this book, they may have little difficulty in concluding that, as a matter of fact, he has not read much in this direction. But as a London journalist he has been for

many years kept face to face with the problems of poverty and industrial strife, and he has endeavoured earnestly, and he thinks he may say honestly, to see his way through them. He has done his best to think the matter out for himself, and he is in hopes that the musings of an independent and unbiased observer may afford some assistance to those who are perplexed by the movements of the time.

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THE SOCIAL HORIZON.

CHAPTER I.

LARGER AND LARGER BUSINESS SCHEMES.

IF you look back along the commercial and industrial history of this country, you will find that, broadly speaking, it is the history of a steady, continuous, and ever-accelerating tendency to larger schemes, to more elaborate organisation, to closer and closer approximation to public control. I am not now, it must be understood, alluding to enterprises of a purely trading character, such as some of the great commercial companies of times gone by, which were often the creation of kingly power in the granting of monopolies, charters, and so forth. I am alluding to commercial and industrial affairs involving the employment of the mass of the people. First you have every tradesman manufacturing and trading for himself. Then, with population increasing, and means of communication developing, opportunities for business widen out till they become too large for individual capital and management, and you see combinations into small trading firms and joint-stock companies. Gradually you find

such enterprises developing, organisations becoming more intricate and extensive, and the powers they acquire are found to be capable of seriously affecting the rights of individuals and the welfare of the public. Then Government steps in and lays down laws for the regulation of such enterprise, prohibiting this, moderating that, stipulating the other thing, interfering and controlling everywhere.

Every now and again there is a dismal wail of protest and complaint against grandmotherly Government. You are handicapping industry, you are scarifying away capital, you are interfering with the freedom of contract and the liberty of the subject. But it is all unavailing. Grandmother always gets her way. Sooner or later the complainants invariably have to yield, and public control is again and again asserted. Larger interests, more elaborate organisations, a wider circle of shareholders, greater and greater public control, until we have here amongst a hundred other gigantic concerns a London and North-Western Railway, with its 60,000 employés, its annual budget of ten millions of money, and its funded debt of a hundred millions—so close an approximation to a thing of national creation and control that it might all be taken over to-morrow without necessarily involving the slightest practical change.

I am not at the present moment, you will perceive, considering whether this tendency is good or bad. I am simply noting an unquestionable movement clearly discernible throughout our entire history, or, at all events, throughout our recent history—a movement which of late years has become almost appalling

in its accelerating rapidity. Everywhere and in every department of commercial and manufacturing activity, the tendency is to big businesses, to large operations, to the building up of great machines. I think no man of any knowledge of the world around him, and of the history of his country, will deny this.

Now let me put this plain question:—How are we—whether we believe that such matters are controlled and directed by a personal Providence, or whether we believe that they are subject simply to the blind evolutionary forces that sweep onward with the steady and resistless might of the ocean tide—how are we to regard this tendency? Remember that it is not due to any casual or temporary cause. It is not due to any mere wrong-headedness of men of business. It is not due to the prevalence of any vicious commercial principle. It is not due even to voluntary choice in many cases. It is a dominant, overmastering, irresistible tendency of the times, due, in a great measure, at least, to the increase of population, and to the steady march of scientific discovery and mechanical invention. With scientific discovery and mechanical invention men are bound to go, and these forces are rapidly taking industrial and commercial enterprise out of the hands of small traders and manufacturers, and transferring it to great organisations.

Just look around. A hundred years ago, stage-coaches—managed upon a system perfectly marvelous to our great-grandfathers for swiftness, and punctuality, and convenience—stage-coaches, and waggons, and carrier's carts in the hands of small proprietors afforded the main travelling facilities all

over the land. They have given way to vast railway systems. Thirty years ago the rival 'buses of small owners were plying all over London, and there was no such thing as a large cab company, or a tram company, or an underground railway. To-day, with the exception of a part of the cabs and a small number of the omnibuses, the whole business of street passenger conveyance is in the hands of proprietary bodies that may almost be numbered on our fingers' ends, while all the allurements of speculation and all the stress of competition are continually suggesting amalgamation and combination—are being pushed in the direction of entire monopoly, that is, and at the same time 'buses, and tramcars, and cabs have all been placed under stringent public regulations.

Again, within the memory of all of us parcel-carrying was a business for small men. Not many years ago the first of the great parcel companies came upon the scene, and it appears but the other night that I, as a journalist, was up at the General Post-office to witness the sight presented there on the occasion of the first despatch of parcels by public machinery. It is the same in almost every direction. Five-and-twenty years ago, the shoemaker's stall was the place where boots and shoes were actually made. To-day, for the great mass of people, they are made in huge factories full of the clatter and rattle of machinery. Twenty years ago almost every milkman who came to your door was a master man. He could keep his cow where he pleased, and sell you as much water in your milk as you were simple enough to

take. Now, he must construct his cowsheds according to Privy Council Orders, his milk is subject to Board of Trade inspection, and he himself is being rapidly absorbed into huge centralised systems, one of which—and that I am assured by no means the largest—makes in London 60,000 calls a day with ha'porths and pen'orths of milk. The meat trade is going the same way. To say nothing of the vast enterprises by which meat is poured into our markets from Chicago and the River Plate, from Australia and New Zealand, there are companies in Smithfield owning butcher's shops in almost every town in the kingdom. Even the army is much more of an organic whole than it was fifty years ago. Lord Wolseley will tell you that when he entered the service, the British army was merely a very loose aggregation of autonomous regiments almost without any organised cohesion whatever. Many of those only now in middle age can remember when the clothing of every regiment rested absolutely with the colonel. The colonel drew so much money for the clothing of so many men, and he made the best bargain he could for his country—and himself—with sweating contractors. That system lasted until we went to war in the Crimea, and then there was a dreadful scandal, and the whole business was reorganised. The work is now done for the whole of our infantry by a great Government department, housed in a splendid factory up at Pimlico, where the seamstresses are comfortably accommodated in a sort of Crystal Palace, and where everything is done by machinery, even to the cutting out of the garments and the pressing of

the seams. Again, anyone who will go and inspect a well-appointed modern laundry, such, for instance, as may be found in any London prison or workhouse, will perceive at once that the very washerwomen in our midst, are, as individual workers, as inevitably doomed to disestablishment as though they were all Archbishops of Canterbury. Turn to the grocery business. You will find that beyond all question, competition is keener there by far than it ever was. Small grocers find it more and more difficult to hold their ground. To make a given income, a grocer must now do a much larger trade than he need have done five-and-twenty years ago. There are stores to be competed with, and great joint-stock concerns with branches all over the kingdom. They buy largely, get special terms, take advantage of discounts, and are thus enabled to cut profits so fine that there is simply no chance for small competitors. A man who could formerly live comfortably on a trade of four or five thousand a year must now do fifteen or twenty thousand or he must soon shut up shop. For magnitude of scale, for organisation and methods of business, and for smallness of profit on each transaction, some of the stores and larger retail grocery businesses of London and our other great centres of population would, fifty years ago, have been among the wonders of the world. To-day, these big concerns and their splendid management are so familiar that we none of us think anything of them, but they are, nevertheless, quietly absorbing into themselves the greater part of the business of distributing groceries, leaving every year less and less room for small retail shops. I was

recently discussing these matters with a much respected member of Parliament, one of the largest brewers in the kingdom. "Yes," he said, "there is no doubt that it is so. We find just the same movement in our business. We are bound to keep on taking over houses and enlarging our operations. We don't want to do so. We would rather not; but we are obliged to do it."

Large businesses, highly-developed organisation, that has been the tendency everywhere for a long time past; it is the tendency at this moment when, remember, we are only just at the threshold of the age of electricity, and may reasonably expect a still further swiftening of our onrush in the same direction. Precisely the same forces that are tending to the extinction of small businesses now and are compelling men to combine in great operations, and large and comprehensive schemes of business, will continue to operate in the future, and the probability is that they will continue to operate with a sort of compound accumulation of effect, which at present we can but faintly realise.

But even though there should be no acceleration of the process, suppose this sort of thing should continue to go on merely as it has done in the past and is doing now, what must be the inevitable effect? The inevitable course of things is as clear as the pathway of the sun across the heavens. At present these big businesses are thriving and expanding by absorbing the profitable trade of the smaller concerns about them. A little later on they will be grappling in competition with each other. Of course, they are

competing with each other now, but as time goes on this competition will become keener and keener, and by sheer stress of necessity they will be forced to combine and amalgamate. At the present moment there are but eighteen gunpowder manufacturing firms in the kingdom, all of them, of course, large concerns. Yet I was told the other day by the manager of one of them that so keen was the competition for business that in some departments of their trade their capital hardly yielded them as much as they could have got by investing in Consols. What is the obvious remedy? Is there any sort of backward movement possible? Of course there is not, and they cannot long stand where they are. First, they will try what can be done by forming a ring. As a matter of fact they did try something of the sort the other day—met together and came to some understanding about prices, but one or two of them broke faith with the rest, and the thing collapsed. The ring having been tried and found unsuccessful, or having been established and found to work satisfactorily for a time, must eventually suggest a still closer connection and consolidation of interests, and amalgamation of capital will be the final stage. In Germany the trade has actually attained to this. The whole manufacturing interest has combined in one great concern, and complete monopoly has been established.

What has been the precise effect of this in Germany I do not know, but it is quite obvious that the tendency would be to raise the price of gunpowder, and, clearly, if the same thing should one day be effected in England, prices might be expected to go up here

also. An increase in the prices would not, perhaps, be absolutely necessary, because the saving effected by amalgamation would largely increase the profits. Indeed, in America the formation of great rings and trusts has in some cases resulted in a decided lowering of prices, so great has been the economy of working. The economy, however, has been obtained partly by the wholesale dismissal of superfluous labour, and the formation of monopolies clearly puts the community at the mercy of those who hold them. At present these monopolies are comparatively young, and those who have obtained them can hardly afford to show all the power they have secured. Their policy is to disarm hostility and to encourage confidence. Let them get as old as the London gas and water companies, and feel their position as strong, and they would be just as ready to take full advantage of their power, if only with the object of enhancing the market-value at which they must be bought out. In the case of gunpowder, the population at large would not, perhaps, feel greatly aggrieved. But that very process of extinction and combination, which in Germany has resulted in establishing a monopoly in the gunpowder trade, and has all but attained the same thing here in England, is going on with the utmost rapidity in the matter of meat, and milk, and grocery, of boots, and shoes, and clothes, and books, and printing, and railway travelling, and almost everything else. They are all going that same way. I have pointed out the fact that there are companies in Smithfield with butchers' shops in every considerable town in the kingdom. With their large capital and

extensive business, I am told that wherever they have set up in a town, the general effect has been to bring down prices about twopence a pound. Even then, one of them was for a time, I believe, able to pay a dividend of eighteen per cent. While I am writing this page that company has just issued one of its annual reports. It shows that they own over five hundred shops. They have spent over a million of money in the purchase of businesses and plant, consisting mainly of refrigerating stores in different towns, and refrigerating machinery in various large steamers, in which they bring their enormous imports. How is it possible for the ordinary butchers of provincial towns to stand their ground against such competitors? The weaker ones must soon be snuffed out, and those that are strong and able to be troublesome are bought up, and, sooner or later, competition in meat supply comes to an end. An organisation of this sort is bound to push on to monopoly, because without it they are always liable to find themselves in the predicament in which the report I have referred to shows that this company is in. Not long ago, as it has been said, they were paying eighteen per cent. Last year, with all their capital, and all their shops, and their plant, they made a loss of £70,000. Why was this? Simply because the cost of beef had gone up in America, from which they imported; and owing to competition with other importers and with rival retail dealers, they were unable to raise their prices correspondingly in this country. Just so long as there are two of them left to cut against each other, so long will there be the strongest

possible inducement to try and crush out or buy up the rival, or to amalgamate with him. This is precisely what is going on between the two great omnibus companies in London at this moment. Everybody knows that for years past ruinous rivalry has been maintained between the London General Omnibus Company and the Road Car Company. For a long time it was a question of crushing out. The Road Car Company were no sooner on the streets than the others grappled with them in deadly competition. They are said to have spent fabulous sums of money in running omnibuses at a loss so as to ruin their young rival. But the young rival has taken more to ruin it than was calculated on, and the General Omnibus Company has itself suffered most seriously, and both bodies of shareholders are crying out for truce. Here is an extract from a newspaper report of the last meeting of the Road Car people. The chairman said: "They had held their own during the past half-year, and as to future prospects he said they might benefit probably by an increase of fares (applause). But that was a matter which did not rest with the Board of the Car Company (applause). They had been ready to meet their rivals and adjust the fares for a very long time past, but the directors of the General Company had not yet seen their way to do so (cries of 'They will'). He hoped they would. Why the General Omnibus Company's accounts were not out he could not say. Perhaps the directors could not decide who should be sacrificed to the indignation of their own shareholders. When the matter was settled, probably

they would issue their report. Whether their rivals were getting tired of the suicidal policy they pursued he could not say, but he did think the shareholders of the General Company were (applause). When the shareholders of the General Company forced their board to exercise common-sense, the directors of the Road Car Company would be pleased to meet them, and there might then be an adjustment of fares." A shareholder said, "he should do his best to bring about a reconciliation between the two companies. He moved, 'That this meeting urges upon the directors that a friendly conference be held with the directors of the London General Omnibus Company in order to bring about a rearrangement of fares for the benefit of both companies and their shareholders.'" Another shareholder seconded, and the resolution was agreed to.

That is a near approach to a final stage, and some day, though it may be a long time hence, the business of our meat supply will be in very much the same position. The public will find itself at the mercy of a monopoly, and, of course, will be compelled to step in, and, just as they have done in the London gas supply, will stipulate for quality and limited dividends, and in other ways secure the rights of consumers at large. That is the last stage but one. Finally the public will see that meat supply is a matter of vital interest to everybody, just as they are now coming to regard the water supply in London. It is everybody's business, and it ought to be managed by the public and in the interests of the public. If there were still all the ramifications of 100,000 small private businesses to be

dealt with, the task of extinguishing them and re-organising the whole supply on a national basis would be almost hopelessly impracticable. Nobody would dare to propose it. But here you have a monopoly, and all the machinery of a monopoly ready to your hand, and already, to a very great extent, under your control. When the movements actually going on now have developed to that point, the final stage will come easily and naturally. Society will feel that it is not getting all the advantages it ought to do, will quietly step in and assume complete control of this section of its food supply, and we have made another definite and irreversible step along the path towards universal co-operation.

But how long will it take to bring this about? you may ask, perhaps. I cannot pretend to say. I have taken the meat trade merely as an illustration, and it may very possibly be that that would be one of the very last to come under complete public control. I am pretty sure that if we each knew what we have to pay for the long line of intermediary agents between the man who fattens the bullock and the butcher's boy who hands our sirloin down the area steps, the meat trade would be one of the first. But these things are hidden from us, and how long it may be before any given trade shall have worked its way up through the various stages of competition into a complete social development must depend upon innumerable contingencies that it is quite impossible to gauge or calculate. What I am endeavouring to show is that, in the ordinary working of business competition, we have this tendency to monopoly, which

is not only preparing our industrial affairs for public control, but must eventually compel the public to assert that control. In the very nature of competition in business — in the very principle which many good people regard as the one vital and essential feature of it, we find the germ of its own destruction and extinction. The keener becomes competition the more rapidly shall we move on towards monopolies, and the very men who are pushing their business in the most unscrupulous spirit of rivalry are those who are playing fastest into the hands of the Socialists.

CHAPTER II.

FARMING IN THE FUTURE.

THERE is one industry, which, it may occur to many readers, appears to present an exception to the prevailing rule discussed in the last chapter. I mean the cultivation of the soil. The general drift of manufacturing and distributive enterprise in the direction of large concerns seems too clear to be mistaken ; but there are some facts which might be supposed to indicate that agriculture, the largest and most important of all our commercial interests, shows a strong tendency in the other direction. One is continually hearing of the advantages of *la petite culture*, and some, at least, of these advantages are patent and obvious. Sismondi and Mill, and many others, have urged, with great force, the remarkable results of small landed proprietorships in Switzerland and France, and other parts of Europe, and, indeed, all over England allotments and cottage gardens have been made to yield crops that have been quoted throughout the length and breadth of the land in illustration of the immeasurable advantages of spade culture and individual effort. If, as many persons contend, we cannot have agriculture in a flourishing and satisfactory condition until we get back to small holdings and single-handed effort, why, we have here an exception of more

vital importance than the rule we have been considering.

On the face of the matter, however, there are some facts which are clearly not to be reconciled with the supposition that farming will eventually be done on the small culture system. For example, within the recollection of us all, the scythe and the sickle, the rake, the prong, the flail, and the brawny arms of the peasant have all, to a very large extent, given place to elaborate and costly machinery. The soil is broken up, and seed is sown, and corn is cut and bound and threshed, and potatoes are dug, and sheep are sheared, and hay is made, and ricks are built—all by machinery. And, moreover, one sees that those countries which have the largest cornfields, and employ the finest machinery, are the growers who have been cutting our own farmers out of the market, and it is evident that they have been able to do this partly, at least, because of their extensive operations and economical methods. These, I think, are facts quite indisputable, and they might well lead any thoughtful observer, even though he knew nothing of our agricultural districts, to doubt very gravely whether it could be at all likely that the agriculture of the future could be carried on by small men on a system of small holdings and individual effort. How is it possible, he might ask himself, that this sort of enterprise could be carried on, except by large capital and on an extensive scale?

If you come to consider it from that point of view, it seems improbable that small-scale farming can possibly be the system of the future, and if you go into the

agricultural districts you will find, that, just as in towns, small businesses are giving place to great organisations, so in the country small farms are being absorbed into great ones. Large farms, worked with sufficient capital and the best machinery, and under competent management, can be made to pay, while small farmers are very generally retiring from the contest more or less broken and beaten. This is indisputably the case over a large part of rural England, and judging from the causes assigned for it, there can be little doubt that sooner or later this must be the course of things throughout the country. I am speaking now, it must be understood, of commercial agriculture. I see not the slightest reason to believe that the time will ever come when the cottager may not find great advantage, as well as the healthiest of all pleasures, in growing fruit, and flowers, and vegetables for his own consumption. I hope, and I believe, that the householder's garden, and its pleasant and useful industry, are never likely to be absorbed into any great system. While a man keeps to the plot of ground he can cultivate himself for the growing of food for his own table, he is keeping well within safe lines. He is more interested in it than anybody else could be ; he is likely to find a pleasure in doing it well, and to take a pride in getting the best results. No big system can possibly beat him at this. But, as I have said, elsewhere, the cottage cultivator of the soil "cannot, in a general way, advantageously do more than raise produce for his own consumption. This is well within his own strength, and he is quite sure of his market. The moment he steps out beyond this—has to employ

another man to help him, to interfere with his own wage-earning, and to find a market for his produce—he is out in the great commercial world, subject to its vicissitudes and fluctuations, needing capital and experience and business knowledge.”

It is this great commercial world that is being rapidly sucked in to the swirling currents of force that seem to be so mysteriously evolving systems and organisations out of the chaos of individualism, and in these swirling currents our vast agricultural industry is being caught up just as inevitably and as swiftly as the manufacturing and distributive activities of our great cities. At the present time everything connected with the occupancy and use of land in this country appears to be on the verge of great changes, and what may be the outcome of our unsettlement it would perhaps be rash to predict. It would be especially rash to assume that while all other productive industries are moving in the direction of large systems, farming alone is going in the direction of small ones. There are times, I suppose, when we all of us feel inclined to deplore the changes that are going on around us in the rural world. Deep down in the consciousness of most of us there is a certain sentiment of Conservatism which clings fondly to the past, and is especially resentful of any innovation upon the time-honoured associations of the country. But Providence, knowing well that the innovation of one generation is the time-honoured association of the next, deals with ruthless unconcern with these little prejudices of ours. We hate the innovation; we protest against it; we insist on the superior advant-

ages of "spade industry" and small holdings—and we may even take practical measures for getting back to the old order of things, but it is of no use fighting against the influence of the stars in their courses, and if we wish to see the world's future agricultural system for the supply of the great staples of food, I am afraid we shall have to look, not backward at the pleasant cornfields of England, but forward to the great wheat regions of Western America on the borderlands of the Pacific, where the cultivation of grain is carried on upon a gigantic scale and by means of machinery which has quite eliminated all the poetry of the cornfield and all the pleasant activities associated with it. By such mechanism and by that alone—other things being equal—can corn be got into the market at the lowest figure, and all the wide world over, whatever comes in competition with that system will, sooner or later, go down before it as inevitably as the stage coach has gone down before the railway. What may be the future of English land, and the system of the cultivation of it, for the next generation or two may be doubtful, but that the production of the great staples of food for the people of all civilised countries is going at present rapidly in the same direction as all other productive industries, I think there is every reason to believe.

CHAPTER III

ARE MEN THEN TO BECOME MERE MACHINES?

BIG businesses, centralised organisations, public control—that I repeat has been the tendency for a long time past, it is the tendency at this moment when, as I have said, we are only just at the threshold of the age of electricity, and may reasonably expect a still further acceleration of our onrush in the same direction.

How, I ask again, are we to regard this? Are we mysteriously being led on some false track? Shall we by and by have to hark back to some point at which society first took a wrong turn and start afresh? Probably not. To some of us it seems clear almost beyond the possibility of mistake. "Order is Heaven's first law," as Pope says. We are moving on in a grand evolution of a social and industrial order out of a semi-barbarian chaos. The talent for organisation, the power of organisation, the appliances for organisation are everywhere being rapidly evolved. In all directions people are being forced to subordinate themselves to great systems, to take their places according to their capacity as portions of great machines.

But can it be that Providence, or Nature, or evolution, or whatever we may individually prefer to call

that mysterious power that is shaping our ends and directing our course for us, often, as it would seem, in the most ruthless disregard of our preferences and opinions—can it be that Providence intends that men shall become mere fragments of machinery?

Well, I take it that you cannot find any safer method of speculating on the intentions of Providence than by closely observing and studying the actual doings of Providence through long periods of time, and I have endeavoured to show some reason for believing not only that Providence intends this, but that Providence is actually doing this on a gigantic scale and with ever-quickenning power—that the great masses of mankind concerned in all our productive and distributive activities are really becoming mere cogs and wheels in great systems of human mechanism, and the higher the civilisation the more vast and elaborate the machinery, and the more puny and impotent does the individual become. You may dislike these facts, but facts they are, and it is of no use to shut your eyes to them.

Is Providence, then, actually crushing out human individuality, and crippling, and fettering personal freedom out of existence? Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, in this way, probably the only possible way, there is being slowly wrought out a grand scheme of human freedom and the fullest possible scope for personal faculty.

Where we are apt to make a mistake in the consideration of this subject, is in forgetting that in any really satisfactory scheme of social life there should always be not only a working-day in which

every man may very advantageously to himself submit to disciplinary restraint and organised co-operation with his fellow-men, but also a large margin of leisure time.

It is to leisure time after a fair day's work that you must look for the exercise of freedom and the development of individuality, so far, at least, as regards the great mass of mankind. So far as the vast majority of people are concerned, just consider for a moment how utterly impossible it is that in their work they can either be free in any important sense, or can cultivate any of that personal faculty, that individual talent, to the idea of which many of our individualist friends cling with such infatuation. Probably by far the larger number of people in England to-day are performing merely mechanical acts. An enormous proportion of them are simply watching and co-operating with machines. They are part and parcel of their machines and must work with them. With hundreds of thousands of people the slightest assumption of freedom in their work, the slightest play of individuality, and there would be instant mischief. Only the day before writing this page, I was talking with the locomotive superintendent of one of the great railways running out of London, and the conversation turned on the men who made the best engine-drivers. After twenty years' experience he declared emphatically that the very best engine-drivers were those who were most mechanical and unintelligent in their work. He asserted his belief that it was a distinct disadvantage for a man to bother his head about the internal

mechanism of his engine. The very best men were those who stuck to their rules and concentrated their whole and undivided attention on doing just what they were told to do. How far that may have been a wise and discriminating judgment on the part of this experienced superintendent as regards this particular class of men, the reader is as well able to judge as I am. Brunel, the engineer of the Great Western Railway, implied the same thing when he said in effect that he should have made a very poor locomotive driver. His thoughts would have been too much taken up by his engine. Certainly, it is unquestionably true that the gist of what the railway superintendent said of his men might be applied to a vast proportion of operatives throughout the country. Stick by their rules, work by their patterns, do just as they are told and all goes well. Exercise the slightest degree of free will and there is mischief at once. An act of individuality is the breaking of a cog, it is the insertion of a pebble among the wheels. Not long ago I was talking with the manager of one of the great wholesale clothing-houses in London, on the subject of the sweating system and the "middlemen." Among other reasons why the middlemen could not be dispensed with he gave me this. "Suppose," he said, "we have an order for a hundred coats to sample. We cannot give them out to fifty or a hundred people, the actual workers of the garments. If we did we should have them brought in made up in fifty or a hundred different ways. No two workers would turn out their work exactly alike. We are bound to hand them over to middlemen, whose

business it is to ensure uniformity of work throughout." There is a certain standard of work set up and nobody must venture to depart from it. This systematic repression of originality is observable throughout by far the greater extent of manufacturing England, and it is distinctly on the increase as one function after another is taken up by machinery or sub-divided among several hands. No doubt there are many mechanical trades and employments which do afford, and will always afford day by day to those engaged in them, a certain scope for the exercise of judgment, and discretion, and versatility of skill. But if you come to think of it—if you take into account all the mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, all the mere labourers, all those who are working under direct personal control, all those whose actions are dependent on the movements of machinery, including all the factory hands in the kingdom, you will undoubtedly find that the workers whose employment affords them any exercise of freedom, any personal scope whatever, are really in a very small minority. And even in the occupations which do afford some little play for skill, how narrowly restricted that play is. Take a bricklayer for instance, or a stone mason, or a journeyman house-painter, or a railway porter, or a clerk in a counting-house. How extremely narrow is the limit within which they may exercise any individuality of their own.

On this subject people talk and write as though the work a man does for a living must always be the one great all-absorbing interest of his life, and as they cannot reconcile themselves to the idea of men with-

out freedom, without some sort of play for their personal characteristics, they naturally shrink from the idea that the daily work of life is becoming more and more mechanical, and that men are becoming more and more parts and parcels of great machines. The whole of life, in their conception, is working for a living, and men's whole being, or as much of it as mental and physical endurance will permit, must always be given up to a struggle for mere bread and butter. As this, in their belief, must always be so, they have a vague, feeble sort of notion that somehow a man's work should be so arranged as to be consistent with his personal freedom and his individuality of character, and they dread the idea of Socialism, because they see in its rigorous system the absorption of the individual into large masses, and they fancy that by such means men must necessarily be levelled down to abject uniformity. It is the merest moonshine. In any final and satisfactory social order no man's life should be wholly given up to making his living, but for a considerable portion of his waking existence every man may not only without injury, but with positive benefit, bend his neck to some sort of yoke, to a fair share of some form or other of the world's work, and he must submit to whatever conditions render his labour most effective—that is to say, he must become embodied in the highest possible organisation of his industry, and must perform his part with the precision, the regularity, and the subordination of a machine.

Let it be clearly understood that I am speaking not of all the world's work, but merely of its mercantile

and manufacturing drudgery—the great mass of the world's uninteresting work. One sometimes hears it asked, "How far would you carry your organisation? Where are you going to stop? Do you propose to bring everybody and everything under this mechanical *régime*?" Most certainly not. There is obviously a line beyond which this systematising and organisation, this drilling and subdivision, can by no possibility ever be carried. The line is very undefined, not by any means easily discernible, but nevertheless absolutely impassable. On this side the line are all sorts of manufacturing, producing, and distributing agencies; the more such work can be systematised and organised the better. On the other side the line are all the artistic, musical, literary, higher scientific, and intellectual activities. You attempt to organise and systematise in this department of the world's activities, and you simply annihilate. Personal individuality is of the very essence of all genuine art and literature and intellectuality. The moment you begin to apply to these, merely manufacturing methods of labour and production, the individuality vanishes, and the one principle which gave your productions their worth and interest has irretrievably gone. You have lost your great painter whose every successive work has some fresh beauty, some more exquisite touch of delicacy, some diviner manifestation of creative genius, and you have got a machine whose endless iterations and repetitions weary and repel you. You have lost all the brightest and freshest and most original of authorship, and you have got in its place an insipid *réchauffé* of borrowed ideas mechanically pumped up

to order. You have lost your musician, and you have set up your hurdy-gurdy. Where one may hope that the advancing organisation of society will benefit art, science, and literature, will not be in reducing their devotees to any sort of systematic control, but in arranging for them such circumstances as will render them entirely free to develop to the utmost whatever genius and originality there may be in them. Intellectual work, as long as intellect endures, will find its highest and fullest development in the completest freedom from all restraint, and it is just because I see that the ultimate issue of developments now in progress will be to give the fullest possible play to heart and intellect for the whole community, that I fervently believe in it.

It is the world's drudgery, and that alone, that is being so highly organised, and massed, and economised. Sound wisdom and the plainest common sense would suggest the expediency of this, and all the tendencies of the industrial world are conspiring to bring it about. That men are being drilled into machines may seem very dreadful, and if you make them nothing but machines it really is dreadful enough. To think of people spending twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours a day making nothing but button-holes, or filling lucifer match-boxes, or driving in the rivets of boot soles, or starting and stopping a couple of horses, is indeed horrible. But only let the hours be short and the leisure abundant, and there is nothing horrible about it. On the contrary, in all the ordinary manufacturing and commercial affairs of life, the more closely men approximate to machines

and the more thoroughly they are systematised into co-operation with men and machinery around them, the better in every way. A man who toils is not the more of a drudge because he toils as part of a great system. A man who has to walk ten miles along a dreary road will not find his way the wearier because he marches in step with 500 other men. On the contrary, the way will be shorter and the labour less irksome. Mechanical precision of duties, regularity of functions, and association with large bodies of toilers do not increase the severity of toil ; they distinctly tend to lighten it. Moreover, union is strength ; system is economy. It is only by union and by system that human forces can be fully effective. By system, and unity, and organisation, you lighten and mitigate drudgery, while you fetch out of it the utmost it can possibly yield. At this moment the great bulk of the world's work—its commercial, its manufacturing and distributive work—is mere drudgery, and mere drudgery the great bulk of it always will be, although it should be carefully borne in mind that the triumphs of science and mechanism in the past are probably utterly insignificant compared with what may be expected in the future, and it is impossible to say how much of this drudgery and toil may by and by be undertaken by machinery. The vastly preponderating mass of the working-classes of this country have no more freedom in their daily work, no more scope for the development of individuality of character, than the clanging and clattering machinery with which they are co-operating. The only rational way to discuss this question is to assume as a funda-

mental fact that, as a rule, with comparatively very few exceptions, the work by which people live is more or less mechanical, more or less in the nature of drudgery, and that the only hope for evolving special talents, for calling forth the best that it is in every man's power to make of himself, is not in the mere myth of freedom and enterprise in his daily toil for a living, but in obtaining for him ample leisure, and the means of advantageously employing it when his daily task of work is done.

It is just this leisure time that the Providential Government of the world seems to me to be preparing for the whole population by all the forces and currents of the times. All this mechanism, all this organisation, all this system simply means that we are swiftly and surely developing a social order, in which the drudgery of life shall be got through in the easiest way and by the shortest methods.

By the revelations of science, by the astounding advance of mechanism, and by the organisation of human effort, the gradual evolution of society is preparing to mitigate the drudgery of life and to shorten to the utmost its necessary duration; thus, as I have said, slowly working out a grand scheme of human freedom and the fullest possible scope for personal faculty.

You remember some of you what a pæan of rejoicing prophecy was raised when the sewing machine was first announced to an almost incredulous world. The song of the shirt was soon to become quite out of date.

“ Oh ! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet !

With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet !
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want,
And the walk that costs a meal."

Well, these primrose walks were all to be enjoyed again, for the sewing machines were going to do in three hours or less what those weary fingers had taken twelve to get through. The same amount of necessary work would be done, and there would be ample leisure for flowery walks and all the sweet amenities of home life. What has become of that bright vision? The whole land is humming with sewing machines, but what of the flowery walks and the blue skies and the heart's ease? Was it all a mere poet's fancy? No; it is coming yet. Just look around you and see what is actually going on. Here you have industrial systems that men are building up for themselves, and all unconscious of the part they are playing in the grand procession of humanity; there you have the rush and roar of a printing press, which, in its mechanical resources and its intellectual and moral power, is quite new to this old world of ours; yonder you have school-houses and educational systems such as the world hardly dreamed of a hundred years ago. Everywhere electricity is binding the earth together in one throbbing, pulsating entity; in all civilised nations you find democracy gathering strength; and high over all the din and tumult of these transition times you have the very demagogues in your streets proclaiming the Fatherhood of God

and the brotherhood of man. Men are learning to work in great organised systems; great administrative talents are being evolved and trained for the management of these systems; and meanwhile the masses of the people are gathering the fitness and the power to rise up and assert their right to control these vast industrial machines, no longer for individual gains, but for the universal benefit. This coming reign of law, this age of peaceful, harmonious working is slowly dawning upon us, and we ought to find in the light over the hill-tops, not the threatening glow of incendiary fires, portending social ruin and destruction, but the advent of a brighter and a better day.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCIPLES PRACTICALLY APPLIED.

ASSUMING then that the principle of public control is a safe and sound one, let us look a little at the practical application of it.

Just look around on society to-day, more especially in London and our other great centres of population. What a frightful struggle is this getting of a living with the great body of the people! Even in the case of those who are not designated "the poor," what an incessant grind is this business of just keeping body and soul together, what ceaseless anxiety is involved in just making both ends meet. We are apt to discuss this subject as though the actually unemployed were the only people to be considered, and it is true, of course, that the absolute lack of employment is the most urgent symptom of industrial disorder; but, really, if one comes to look a little into the homes and lives of those of our working population who are more or less regularly employed, it becomes sadly apparent that the problem to be solved is something far greater than merely the setting to work of those who are at present unemployed. Oh! the hopeless, monotonous dreariness of everyday existence in lower London! Oh! the life-long tragedies that one finds every here and there behind neat little parlour

window-blinds in the streets, where decent poverty does its best to look respectable and prosperous! I have sometimes been out and about with missionaries, and School Board officers, and others in my capacity as a journalist, and I have gone home with no impression on my mind deeper than that of profound wonder at "that mysterious dread of something after death" that "puzzles the will" and keeps men and women groaning and suffering on as they do, when, as Hamlet says, they might their quietus make with a bare bodkin.

" Oh ! but for one short hour !
A respite however brief !
No blessed leisure for love or hope,
But only time for grief !"

That is the actual and the literal truth as regards the lives of tens and hundreds of thousands of people in London at this moment, and this is due not to any lack of necessary work, but, to a terrible extent, at least, to social conditions which permit and compel people to grapple with each other in fierce competition for it. All competent observers with whom I have talked on the subject seem to be agreed that even as things stand there is really abundance of work for everybody. The main difficulty is that one person is doing two persons' work. Instead of two people doing eight hours' work a day, we have one person doing sixteen hours and the other doing none at all. The life of one is a degrading slavery ; the life of the other is a lingering death. If, as a community, we could lay a strong hand on any consider-

able section of the people who are working too long, and give their excess of work to the miserable sufferers from want of any employment at all—give them all a fair day's work and a fair day's pay—is it not quite evident that we should have begun at once to evolve order out of the chaos, to mitigate suffering, to relieve our poor rates, and our charity funds, and, in short, to solve this terrible social riddle?

Yes, yes, you say, it is easy enough to arrange a fair day's work; but what about the fair day's pay? How are you going to arrange that? Well, wait a little and we will come to that. In the meantime, however, let me remind you that this very subject of a better distribution of employment has already been fought out by one very large and important section of the community. When modern Trade Unionism began to be seriously discussed and practically attempted, this very difficulty of wages was raised among a great many others. It seemed so insuperable, and on many other grounds the aims and objects of Trade Unionists were deemed by all the orthodox political economists of the day so impracticable, so wrong-headed and mischievous, that no measures were deemed too hard and high-handed for its suppression, and the cruellest penal laws were defended and maintained against combinations of workmen. For generations the common law of the land had held it to be a punishable offence for two men to agree that they would not work for more than a certain number of hours a day, nor for less than a certain rate of pay. A man was at liberty to dispose of his own labour on

such terms as he could make, but if he and another agreed as to what those terms should be, they were both, by that very fact of their having come to an understanding, liable to fine and imprisonment. They were guilty of a criminal conspiracy, and to enforce and enlarge the scope of this common law nearly forty Acts of Parliament had been passed at one time or another. Where are those penal laws now, and where are those orthodox philosophers who, within living memory, foretold all kinds of national disasters if these laws were abolished and workmen were to be allowed to form unions? And which of them is prepared to come forward and seriously propose to put down Trade Unions by Act of Parliament? They may believe, perhaps, that Trade Unionism is not all gain, but which of them to-day would deliberately propose to disorganise and break up all the Trade Unions and once more let loose their members in the pernicious competition in which the rest of the industrial world is involved? If that could be done, who would not feel, notwithstanding some possible advantages, that on the whole it would be a step back towards darkness and chaos? On the other hand, if to-morrow we could bring within the pale of Trade Unionism another great section of the working community now struggling in disorganised impotence against the cruel operation of unrestricted competition—if, for instance, we could combine all the 'busmen, and trammes, and cabmen in London into a union sufficiently strong to put the men on a footing of fair equality in making terms with their employers, who would not feel that we had made a step forward? It has been computed

that, in one way and another, there must be in connection with the tramways, omnibuses, and cab services of London somewhere about 40,000 men employed, and it is said—probably with some exaggeration—that they very commonly work sixteen hours a day. Mr. and Mrs. Reaney, the late Congregational minister of Stepney, and his wife, brought upon themselves a good deal of the odium certain to attach to those who advocate radical reforms, by vehemently contending that it was the duty of a Christian community to put down this brutal state of things. They contended that the public ought to acquire these services, and to give these fathers of families an opportunity of sometimes seeing the faces of their own children when awake. Suppose that at that time—some few years ago when there was a terrible outcry in London over the want of work—this suggestion had been adopted. Suppose that the public had acquired on fair and reasonable terms the 'buses, and trams, and cabs of London, and had organised the whole of them as one great branch of the public service, reducing the hours of labour by five-and-twenty per cent. We will assume, for the sake of argument, that 40,000 is the number of the men employed, and that their working hours are sixteen a day. This is not precisely the fact; the working hours are not sixteen throughout, but they come much nearer to that than is generally supposed. If you accept some of the statements officially made on behalf of the Tramways and 'Bus Companies, you will get something much nearer twelve hours a day. "None of our men get more than thirteen hours,"

proudly observed a tramway official to me when, a year or two back, I was discussing with him some of the points in dispute between the company and its servants, and had incidentally referred to a working-day of fifteen or sixteen hours, that some of the men were reported to be regularly undergoing. "None of our men get more than thirteen hours!" Just think of it. A man starts on his first journey at seven in the morning, and he finishes his last journey at eight o'clock at night—summer and winter, wet and cold, all the year round—stopping and starting a tramcar, putting on or taking off the brake, dealing out tickets, or pocketing pence. Think of the dreary monotony of such a life. I found, however, that only by managerial ingenuity could it be made out that thirteen hours was the maximum working-day. That was only the time the man was actually on the car. Ten minutes or twenty minutes between the journeys was not reckoned in his day. All the little odds and ends of time required for getting his supply of tickets, handing in cash, making reports of accidents, waiting about the office for this, that, and the other, none of these things were taken into account, but only just the bare reckoning of the time table, and of course no account was taken of the time a man required for getting to his work and getting home again. So that even where this proud boast could be made, the man who turned out of home at a quarter to seven in the morning could not expect to get back again till between nine and ten at night, and that week after week, month after month, year after year. As to the cabmen of London, they are of course less

regular. For the most part they have a certain sum of money to make up for their cabs, and after that what they take is their own. With good luck a man may get moderate hours, but competition is such that they are often compelled to be prowling about, as I have had them express it to me, "pretty nigh all the hours that God A'mighty makes."

Sixteen hours, taking trams and omnibuses and cabs all round, is not so very far out as the working-day, and we may adopt this figure for the sake of argument. Suppose that we had reduced the working-day of these 40,000 men from sixteen hours to twelve—long enough in all conscience—is it not a mere matter of arithmetic that at one stroke we should have found employment for 10,000 idle men, probably representing not less than four or five times that number of people, all of them suffering more or less in body and soul from poverty? Take the 40,000 men employed on the vehicles of London, or in connection with them, reduce their hours of work and increase their numbers to 50,000, put them into comfortable uniforms, and set up another Government factory for a thousand of the unemployed or the overemployed and villainously underpaid seamstresses of London to make the uniforms for those 50,000 men, and you will immediately send a new life current tingling through every vein of the community.

Oh! yes, yes, you say; that is all very fine; but there are all sorts of objections. Well, of course there are; we are going to look at some of them. But first let us clearly realise what are the advantages we have secured. We have taken 40,000 men out of a

condition of virtual slavery and have made them comparatively free men. We have still left them to a day of twelve hours of hard work and exposure to weather, but we have given them four hours a day leisure time ; and under the same conditions we have found work for 10,000 respectable unemployed men. All these 50,000 men we have taken under our own control, and if at any time we find that the conditions of their labour are such as the public conscience cannot approve, we can instantly apply the proper remedy, and if by-and-by circumstances seem to warrant it, their hours of labour may be gradually reduced to the eight hours' normal day's work of the Post-office and the police, the number of employés being correspondingly increased. All these 50,000 men will be as comfortably clad and as well fortified against the weather as are the police of London. Besides all this there will be a thousand people—or whatever number may be requisite for clothing 50,000 men—taken out of the *mêlée* in the East End or elsewhere, comfortably housed, fully and regularly employed, and fairly paid.

These are some of the advantages that you would secure by the step I am advocating, or by any similar measure; but they are by no means all. It is obvious enough that if by limiting the working-hours of four men you can find work for a fifth otherwise unemployed, the whole community will be benefited by the prosperity of this fifth man. He will soon be buying furniture, and clothes, and food, and possibly reading books and newspapers. It will take a part of another man's time to supply his wants. For every unem-

ployed man for whom you can find productive work, you set, as I have said before, a new life current flowing in the industrial world, while you relieve public burdens. You relieve the parish rates of their liability to maintain that man; you tend to keep him in health and out of the charity-supported hospitals, and the money that in one form or other of public or private benevolence found its way to him from those who are better off, may go to buy pictures, to lay out gardens, to purchase articles of dress, or in a thousand other ways to make it good for trade, and to promote the health and well-being of the community—every bit of it totally free from all taint of pauperism or charity. Some of the objections are obvious enough, especially the difficulty which the political economist who may read this will, of course, perceive in connection with the “wage fund.” As I have said, we are going to consider the difficulties. But what I am anxious to do for the moment is to make clear the advantages that result from every step you can take in this direction. You give leisure to those who are over-employed; you find work for those who are unemployed; you promote trade and relieve public burdens; you make men sturdy and independent; and you get rid of all the evils of pauperising charity, by simply sweeping away all occasion for charity in any form.

Of course there are objections, and if there were no objections on the other side, possibly it might be wise to let things alone. But are there none? Once more I say, look round on London. It has been computed that every year in the Metropolis six millions of

money is poured out in one form or other of charity, besides another two millions in Poor Law relief. Just think of it! Eight millions of money in charity on four or five millions of people, and it is said six families out of every ten throughout the whole Metropolis living, working, and sleeping, in one room, while the latest information from the London School Board, at the moment of writing, shows that in the Board and voluntary schools, on the south of the Thames, there are between ten and eleven thousand starving children, who cannot bring even a penny a day for a dinner. This number includes only children actually attending school, and it does *not* include the children of drunken and undeserving parents. It is the result of a careful selection by teachers who know the children and their home circumstances, and recommend them for free dinners, because their parents, with the best of intentions and the best of efforts, cannot give them a good meal of food, though it may be had for a penny. It should be understood that on the south of the Thames there is only about one-third of the population of London, so that, considering the number of children who cannot be got to school, it looks to be extremely probable that the estimate which some little time ago put down the number of children in London in want of a single good meal a day at 40,000 was well within the mark, and I think it might be added that, taken as a whole, they are the children of struggling and deserving people. Are there no objections to a continuation of that state of things?

As I am writing the post brings me the Ninth

Annual Report of the Board School Children Free Dinner Fund, one of the most ably and temperately written productions of the kind issued by any London charity. It deals with a period during which there has certainly been no exceptional distress. The glimpses it affords into the Inferno of lower London are only such as are always presented to those who will take the trouble to look. Here is a passage from a letter written by a school-mistress to the secretary of the fund—nothing exceptional revealed in it—merely an accurate delineation of a certain stratum of life all around us:—

“ We are profoundly grateful to you for the benefit the children have received and the help given to the teachers. A large proportion of the parents of our children are widows, or have husbands invalided from accidents which have happened to them while at work. The rest are dock labourers, costermongers, or itinerant tinkers, etc. The mothers have often told us that the children never have a *dinner* except what they get at school; the midday meal being a piece of bread with dripping, cheap butter, or treacle spread upon it—sometimes there is no food at all. Not many weeks ago two girls, a widow’s children, came to school having had one slice of bread between them one morning, and no food at all till the afternoon of the *next day*. I was then able to get them a good meal through the kindness of your Society in giving me help for such cases. Another delicate little girl, quite barefooted, came shivering to school, though it was not really cold, and on inquiry I found that she

had had no food that morning, and very little the day before. Another family of five little girls, whose father earns 1s. 6d. per day 'sometimes' by selling wood in the streets, never get anything but bread or a few potatoes at home. Their mother is a cripple. I could multiply such instances, but I fear to write too much. It is very touching sometimes to find the children leaving a few spoonfuls of their dinner, declaring they cannot eat it all in their anxiety to be allowed to take it home, and when told that the food is not to be taken home, pleading that it is only a very little for baby, who will not have anything but a bit of bread. The change in the appearance of the children is very noticeable after the dinners have been going on for a short time; for while half-starved children do not always become rapidly thin, they get white, old-looking little faces and flabby flesh, that tells plainer than words their want of proper food. With regard to the help it is to the teachers, not only from an educational point of view, for, of course, it is almost impossible to really teach a hungry child, but for the comfort it gives them to know that they are not obliged to try to force the poor little ones to give their attention to lessons, while they can only think of their hunger. It is most distressing work for the teachers when they have, as we have often had, children becoming faint, and in some cases actually fainting for want of food."

Here is a list of half-a-dozen cases picked out from a record sent by another teacher—every item of the most ordinary, commonplace description:—

"1. Family in great need; slack work. Father has sometimes two days' work, never more than three.

2. Father no work. 'I am ill now,' the mother writes, 'or I would come up and see you.'

3. Father is an out-patient at the hospital, and earns nothing.

4. Father met with a bad accident.

5. Father is ill, and no work when he is well enough to do it.

6. Father has had no work lately. Mother sent the children to school without breakfast, and came herself to the school to bring them food she had since earned."

And here again is another—merely a string of cases of illness and accident, with the suffering complicated and intensified by abject poverty and want of work. Every poor street in London would afford just such a list:—

"1. Two children in rags, wretched poverty and need, *but at school*. Little girl asked where she lives, replies, with a quiver on her lip, 'We've got no home.' Family turned out for rent arrears.

2. Father in hospital.

3. Father only earns 12s. per week; children delicate.

4. Father in consumption.

5. Father too ill to work; family in great need.

6. Mother ill with cancer; very poor. Father has had very little work from October, 1890, to February, 1891.

7. Father killed through an accident; children in great need.

8. Father, casual labourer, very poor ; five children.

9. Father ill with rheumatism, previously much out of work ; mother very respectable, striving woman ; has a hard struggle to find food for four children.

10. Father, casual labourer, for a twelvemonth has done very little work ; six children.

11. Father earns only 10s. per week the year round ; five children ; four go to school.

12. Father, casual labourer, long out of work ; respectable people. All pledged that can be from the home."

Are there no objections to all this ? Few people at all adequately realise the awful amount of poverty in our midst. When Mr. Charles Booth's invaluable work on the "Labour and Life of the People of London" came out, there were many who found in it a great deal that was comforting and satisfactory. Things were very bad no doubt, but after all they were not quite so appalling as some had made them out. There were the people all set out in distinct masses, all drawn up in ranks and definitely labelled. It was a relief to know the worst, and to many it seemed that after all the worst was not so bad as it had been represented. But what was it that Mr. Booth had to tell us ? Briefly, it was that of the very lowest class—largely made up of the criminal and disorderly—there were 376,000 people ; that of the labouring and casually employed—those who live from hand to mouth, and in a chronic condition of want—there were 316,000 ; while of those who for all the purposes of family life have to do with from eighteen shillings to

a guinea a week—there were nearly a million. Leaving out the lowest class of all—of course largely composed of those who have sunk into it, because of the terrible difficulty of living honestly and respectably—just imagine if you can, 316,000 people living in a condition of chronic want, struggling for the barest existence, hungry and squalid, and harassed by all the vicissitudes of the “casual labourer.”

Are there no objections to all this? A few weeks of frost, some little dislocation of industry, some exceptional depression of trade, and the amount of suffering down in the lower industrial classes of London is something unspeakably sad. For many years, whenever the wail of the starving people has risen a little higher than usual, it has been my lot to have to go into the slums and alleys, and to depict something of the condition of the poor. I have visited their rooms, and listened to their tales of sorrow and suffering, and seen it all written in their haggard faces, and in the squalor and destitution of their surroundings, and I have come away sick at heart and positively ashamed of the very modest comfort of my own home. May it not be just possible that we may gradually develop some better social and industrial system than that under which any falling off from the highest point of commercial prosperity plunges whole strata of our population into such depths of destitution and despair, and entails upon the rising generation all the physical, moral, and mental mischiefs of chronic starvation? Is it not, I earnestly ask you, the bounden duty of us all to be extremely careful that we do not allow mere bogus objections to stand in the

way of any possible remedy for evils of so serious a character? "I didn't make the world, and I am not responsible for it," said a country clergyman to me, when discussing with him some of our social difficulties. No, sir, you didn't make the world, and you are not responsible for it. But if the power that did make the world is manifestly working out under your very eyes a grand scheme of social redemption for those suffering masses, and you in your wilful blindness and culpable ignorance set up your puny back to hinder and obstruct it, if you do your best to thwart and discredit movements which you have not taken the trouble to understand, if you nurse your class prejudices and defend your class privileges, and are ever ready to stand forward as the upholder of things as they are, and to oppose all efforts to put them as they ought to be—then, sir, I say you *are* responsible, even though you didn't make the world.

For my own part I have thought over all the objections I have met with, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, and I don't believe there is one of them that will hold water. But whether I am right or wrong in this belief, bear in mind what I have pointed out to you, that in spite of all the objections you can raise, the current of the times is sweeping you on in that direction with a force which you cannot resist. This public control of industry is coming; you cannot effectively oppose it. But you may indefinitely prolong the miseries of the existing state of things, and you may bring about social disturbances which a timely recognition of the inevitable may avert.

CHAPTER V.

WHERE IS THE MONEY TO COME FROM ?

BUT now let us look at some of the objections, only let it be clearly understood that I am not presuming or pretending to join issue with those old orthodox political economists, whose social science is nothing but the science of making money for the upper classes. There are a good many of them about. Incidentally they will discuss the rights of the labouring poor, the home lives of the masses, the length of the working-day, and so forth, but only incidentally, and in so far as a consideration of such matters bears on the main subject—how communities may become wealthy. The main question with many economists—not the only question, but the main question—is, by what system of things can a community make the greatest amount of wealth? The answer to this is clear, unmistakable, and, on the whole, absolutely indisputable—*laissez faire*. As far as you possibly can, let the whole community compete freely with each other. Some departments of business you will find the State is almost compelled to take over—such, for instance, as the Post-office, the telegraphs, harbours for shipping, and so forth; but the State should not do more than it can possibly help. Let the people fight things out among themselves. The strong will

be sure to come to the top and take command of the weak. These weaker ones will be pitted against each other, and under the stress of unlimited competition they will be compelled to produce to the utmost possible limits of their power, while their consumption of what they produce will be the very smallest they can possibly exist on. That is the old orthodox political economy in a nutshell, and one does not need a special education to see that upon the whole it is unanswerable. As a means of producing wealth for all but the actual workers it is simply unrivalled, and it is not worth while disputing it, even though here and there there are points that are disputable.

If you want simply to make a wealthy aristocracy that is undoubtedly the way to do it. Keep a clear ring, let the people scramble together, take advantage of their greed and their necessities, their weaknesses, and their vices. Screw down their wages to the lowest possible point, and extend their hours of labour to the utmost limit. You will thus get the greatest production at the smallest cost. No better way of making a profit is conceivable. What is the use of disputing about the merits of individualism? It is altogether unrivalled. Sweat the poor and grind their faces, and accumulate wealth. Only let us have no cant about it; while we are consciously and deliberately upholding this selfish and barbarous system of money-making, and are refusing even so much as candidly to consider the possibility of a better system, let us indulge in no hypocritical nonsense about the brotherhood of man. Vast

masses of the poor are not our brothers ; they are our slaves, our machines, our beasts of burden, our "hands," our "sacrificed classes"—but not our brothers.

Those who advocate the public control of industry do not exclusively concern themselves with the production of wealth. They believe with more implicit faith than some who profess to make it a special article of their creed appear to do, that great riches are not necessary to happiness. They hold that healthy living is much more conducive to happiness than vast wealth, and they believe that this is as true of a nation as it is of an individual. Notwithstanding the advantages of individualism, they contend that in many ways it is frightfully wasteful, and that if all men did a very moderate amount of useful work there would be abundance of wealth. Whether there would be a little more or a little less is of no material importance. They would prefer that as a nation we should, if necessary,—though they do not for a moment believe it is,—make less wealth, if only it could be more equably distributed. When, therefore, by way of objection to socialist proposals, the old orthodox economist comes forward with his scientific demonstration that the proposed system will be less productive, the answer of the Socialist is prompt and decisive: "Be it so; we are not concerned to pile up the largest possible accumulation of wealth. We refuse to accept even for the whole community profits which are wrung out of the blood and sweat of over-worked men and women; much more will we refuse to permit, if we can help it, such profits to be wrung

out for the benefit of private individuals, who neither toil nor spin."

Now then to the objections. Says the reader, "It is all very fine to talk of taking over the vehicular traffic of London, reducing hours of labour and putting on additional men from among the unemployed. What about your 'wage fund'? When you take on your 10,000 extra men, are you going to pay them by reducing the wages of the other 40,000?" No; that would be curing one evil, overwork, by substituting another, underpay. The cabmen and busmen of London are by no means too well paid. "Then where will the money come from?" The money, of course, will come just as it does at present. Instead of paying wages to 40,000 men every week we should pay 50,000, and, of course, there would be less profit, and instead of going into the pockets of private capitalists it would go into the public exchequer. But are you sure you would have any profit at all? Possibly not. Let us assume for the moment that there is nothing left for profit. We have the public convenience of trams, buses, and cabs, all over London, and we have secured comparatively fair and satisfactory conditions of life for 50,000 men and their families, 40,000 of whom were cruelly overworked, and 10,000 of whom were absolutely unemployed, and, therefore, in some way or other living on the rest of the community. Of course we were keeping these 10,000 people and their families before, just to the extent to which they were unemployed. They consumed without producing. They were actually a burden on the community. They were, many of

them, degenerating into thieves, and loafers, and permanent paupers, and their children were following in their footsteps. It is true that we are paying these 10,000 men perhaps £15,000 a week in wages, but from the broad public point of view it is by no means all loss of profit. We are paying this £15,000 a week in honest wages, instead of, to a large extent, doling it out in "charity," in poor rates and police rates, or having it pilfered by theft. Now, if for the pennies, the shillings and half-crowns, that Londoners pay for travelling about the streets, we get the best possible service of conveyances, and useful, regular employment for a working section of the population, which, with the men and their families, cannot fall far short of a quarter of a million of people, if we make sure of all this, we, as a community, may be tolerably indifferent to a small balance, or even a considerable balance, on either side of the account.

Even assuming, then, that after paying the wages of our 50,000 men we had no balance at all, and that whenever vehicles and tramways wanted renewing we had to resort to a general rate, there would really be nothing very alarming the matter. The ratepayers would get the benefit of good service, they would have the satisfaction of knowing that their servants were fairly treated, and that, as compared with the old system, they were distributing £15,000 a week in the charitable provision of honest and respectable labour.

But to assume that there would be no balance is of course an absurdity. The public have now practically a monopoly of the travelling services of London, since

they exercise the right of granting licences to all vehicles plying for hire on the streets. With a monopoly of the vehicular traffic of London, to assume that the business could not be carried on at a profit unless the employés throughout the services were kept working unconscionable hours is manifestly preposterous. If that were found to be the case it would indicate something radically wrong, and the whole system would have to be readjusted. In such a service of the busy London public there would be practically any profit we cared to make, the limit being prescribed only by the concessions we chose to make to the public convenience. It would be a matter of no very great labour to set forth an array of figures, making out a financial case for such a scheme. But such an array of figures is wholly unnecessary, because no common-sense business man would for a moment doubt the perfect practicability of acquiring all the interests vested in the passenger vehicles of London on just and even generous terms, and running them as a public concern and making a handsome profit out of it. Part of that profit it would of course be quite practicable to devote to reducing the hours of labour, and thus finding work for the unemployed. Any surplus, after doing this, might go towards the relief of rates, or it might be used to provide tramways and 'buses and cabs in districts of London where such a service could hardly be made to pay, just as the Post-office carries its business into localities where it cannot be made to yield a profit or even to be self-supporting.

On the ground of practicability no reasonable

objection can be raised to this mode of relieving at anyrate one large section of our over-worked London population, and finding useful work for a portion of the unemployed. There are other objections to the broad principle involved in all such schemes, which we will look at presently.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNANSWERABLE OBJECTION.

BUT here comes a body of gentlemen who have a really valid objection, to which it may be just as well to admit at once that no satisfactory answer can be given. It is to be feared that it is quite insuperable. These are the capitalists who have hitherto run our vehicles for us. With some of them we have dealt on terms clearly set forth in Acts of Parliament passed before they had invested a penny in their undertakings. These Acts laid down most explicitly the conditions under which they would be permitted to construct tram lines through the public streets, and specified the terms upon which the lines and everything belonging to them might be acquired by the public at the end of a given time. On these conditions these gentlemen constructed their lines, but we have not driven by any means a hard bargain with them. In taking over their lines we have interpreted the Acts of Parliament as liberally as we could, and as for the rest of these capitalists, we have taken into consideration the money they have actually invested in their trams and cabs and 'buses, we have reckoned the profit they have made and the profit they haven't made, but ought to have done, the risks they have run, and their future prospects, and we have made handsome

allowance for the fact that we have taken over their property, not because they wished to sell, but because we wished to buy. We have taken all this into account, and though we have not allowed them to drive with us so iniquitous a bargain as we were foolish enough to concede over the telegraphs—for communities as well as individuals may profit by experience—we have dealt generously with them. Nevertheless, their faces are all as long as though we had subjected them to the most rascally fleecing. The poor men are in real trouble. They have got back all their money with usury, but they don't know what to do with it; they can find no satisfactory investment for it, and as a gentleman said to me the other day, "What is the good of £20,000 to a man if he can't invest it?" That is the deplorable position in which these poor men find themselves. This socialistic business is really too bad after all. They find, they say, that it interferes with private enterprise, it makes capital a drug in the market, it reduces all to a dead level, it crushes out individuality, and so on, and they darkly hint that if we go further with this sort of thing they will take their capital out of the country altogether. What comfort can we possibly give them? We cannot deny their grievance, for it is beyond all question a real one. They have got money, and they want to live by setting somebody else to work with it. All the philosophers, ever since the first glimmering of political economy as a science, have assured them that capitalists are the pillars of the community and the benefactors of their race, and hitherto we have all of us accepted this as indisputable truth. Nay, more

than this, during the more rudimentary stages of society they have actually been the pillars of that society—entirely indispensable benefactors of their race. It really must be very hard for them to realise that the time has come when they are no longer required. But that is really the fact.

What can we say to them? "Gentlemen, we are very sorry to see so many deserving men wanting employment (for their money), but we really have no need for your services. As you are aware, our credit is of the very best, our profits are large, and we are ourselves accumulating capital so fast that sooner or later we shall be compelled to extend our business. Our customers, the public, you see, are more thriving than they were formerly. We have made an important reduction in the numbers of our unemployed, there are fewer claims on charity, rates and taxes are somewhat lighter, and there is more money circulating. People can afford to ride where they used to walk, and we have had very largely to extend and improve accommodation. We have now sixpenny cab rides, and tramways and 'bus lines are now running into districts where they were never dreamed of before. The number of our employés has at least doubled, to say nothing of the impetus given to the building of vehicles, the laying down of trams, and the making of uniforms. Some of our lines of course do not pay, but then the public get the benefit of them, and, notwithstanding this, the profits on the whole are so handsome that we are deliberating as to whether we shall increase the public accommodation or set up some other department of public enterprise.

The probability is that we may do both. We shall want in either case a great many hands and a great many heads. If you gentlemen, who have had practical business experience, will give us the benefit of your services, we will make you as comfortable as we can, but as to your capital it is really out of the question; we of course have no sort of need for it, and we fear that, as you say, as public assumption of business extends, as it is certain to do, the openings for capital will become fewer and fewer."

Now the position of these unemployed capitalists is well worthy of careful study, because it is just at this point that the brunt of the battle between Socialism and Individualism will be fought. The simplest of readers will not of course suppose that I mean that any body of capitalists will find themselves in this predicament as the result of a single measure such as we have been considering; but it must be perfectly evident that every step in this direction tends directly and powerfully to produce this result. Every field of industrial and commercial activity occupied by the public necessarily of course excludes private enterprise and private capital. We shall have presently to look a little closely into that matter of "private enterprise" to see if we can find what are its merits, and how far there is any justification for the public opinion which attaches such immense importance to it. But whatever may be, or may not be, the merits of private, as compared with public, enterprise, just in proportion as public business extends, the field for private activities must obviously become less, the uses for private capital will disappear, and people with

large accumulations of wealth will find it more and more difficult, as this movement progresses, to discover ways of investing money so as to bring in an income without work. Sooner or later the man with half a million of money will be compelled, poor fellow, either to live on his capital and so nibble it away as long as it will last, or else he will be compelled to do, as Mr. Ruskin has so long and so vehemently insisted that it is every man's duty to do—to live not on interest of investments in any shape or form, but by earning an income at some sort of useful work. This is just what some of us want to bring about, and it is just what the capitalists do not want, and it is on this ground that the battle will be fought. It is just because the investing classes of society perceive that this must be the inevitable tendency of this public enterprise that they so dread and hate the idea of it. All other objections to it are either mere bogies that resolve themselves into the sheet and broomstick when they are scrutinised at close quarters, or else, as we shall find some reason for believing presently, they are objections which have been very real in times gone by, but have become or are rapidly becoming obsolete. But the capitalist's objection is a thoroughly well founded one. He objects to this sort of thing, because if that goes on there will be no such thing as investing wealth for an income. Every one who wants an income will have to work for it. Everybody can see that as regards the Post-office business there is no footing at all for private capital. Nobody makes an income out of the Post-office except the people who actually do the postal work—and those of course,

who, having done their life's work, are pensioned. Some of the workers get ten shillings a week, some of them get £500 a year, and the Postmaster-General gets £2500 a year, but they all work, and not a capitalist in the kingdom makes five pounds a year directly out of the whole business.

Now just in the same way that we have then taken over the letter carrying and the parcel carrying and the telegraphs, so of course we may, if we choose, take over the street traffic, the gas supply, the water supply, the railways, the bakeries, or the milk supply of the public, and every step, while it may be made to afford openings for large bodies of additional workers of all grades, must inevitably thrust out of their means of livelihood the comparatively small body of those who are able to live by lending capital for others to work with. Their capital simply will not be needed. If they require an income they will have to earn it.

CHAPTER VII.

IS IT DESIRABLE TO HAVE AN "INDEPENDENT" CLASS ?

Now the question of course must occur to everybody—Is this really desirable? Is there no solid, all-sufficient advantage in having what we call a leisured class, a section of society entirely independent of personal occupation and drawing and spending large incomes entirely without work? This is a question which, it is to be hoped, many of us at least are able to discuss without any spirit of bitterness or rancorous animosity; we are not actuated by any feeling of envy, by any desire to appropriate to ourselves any of the wealth or the advantages of the upper ten, nor do we look for social reform because we ourselves begrudge others their higher status and what appears to be their better fortune. We want whatever is for the common good. Is it for the common good that we shall take step after step in the development of a social system which must eventually extinguish all incomes not earned by useful work?

In considering this matter, it is important to bear in mind that no very great change in this respect can possibly come about very rapidly. It is not a matter of years, but probably of generations. Socialism will advance just as democratic power generally has ad-

vanced—step by step, point by point, won through sore strain and struggle. Arrayed against it there are now, and to a large extent there will continue to be, all the powers of capital, most of the influence of the press, all the interests of conservatism, of ecclesiasticism, and established interests in every phase and form, a great deal of what passes for the wisdom and intelligence of the times, an almost invincible array of fine old prejudices, and a whole world of obtuseness and dull stupidity. It is impossible that any movement so opposed can make very rapid advance. The danger is that, with all the help of those who are clear-sighted enough to see in this movement the rising light of a new day, and who have that enthusiasm for the general welfare, enabling them to rejoice in it, the advance will be too slow to avert social disturbance and trouble. Let no one apprehend that by any socialistic measures at all within the bounds of practicability, the owners of wealth are likely to find themselves suddenly reduced to work for a living. The difficulty of finding employment for money will, undoubtedly, be increased by every such measure, but the stress of such difficulty will come slowly, little by little, while at the same time, be it remembered, little by little the public service, and the greater general prosperity will afford greater and greater scope for all who wish to work. What I wish to convey is, that we may put entirely from our minds any possible contingency, that persons nurtured in wealth and luxury and leisure may suddenly find themselves deprived of their incomes and reduced to the necessity of finding work. Nothing of the kind is at all likely

to happen. What may and undoubtedly will happen is, that the capitalists of the next generation will find themselves under greater difficulty in the profitable investment of money than capitalists experience to-day, and, therefore, under greater inducement to seek assured income by some active and useful career.

What those careers may be is another point on which it is important that we should be under no misapprehension likely to engender prejudices. The matter is often discussed as though the desire that everybody should work, and should live by his work, were an altogether revolutionary one, calculated to entail unmeasured hardship and degradation on the aristocracy. People talk and write as though, if Socialism were to prevail, dukes might have to become draymen, and duchesses to go to the washtub. All such notions are, of course, very absurd. So long as the world lasts its work will be, at least, as varied as it is now, and the probability is that it will become infinitely more so; and, as I have already pointed out, there is a line beyond which no organisation, no direct public control is within the bounds of possibility. So long as men vary in character, in ability, in tastes, in birth, and surroundings and fortuitous circumstances, a certain adaptation of men for their work, and of work for men must be inevitable. For the cultivated and the refined, for those who are highly born and well-connected, and who have the ability to make themselves useful in any of the higher spheres of labour, those spheres will always be easy of access. Assuming, then, that men may always be engaged—broadly speaking—in the employment for which socially and intellectually

they are best fitted, why should anybody be exempt from the necessity of doing something useful? Are there any better men under the sun than many of those who are labouring as statesmen and public servants, as college professors, as artists, and authors, and journalists, as ministers and clergymen, as engineers and doctors? Have not horticulture, and forestry, and farming, and science, and art, and literature, all of them been largely indebted to the exertions of men who, in every sense of the word, are entitled to be regarded as the aristocracy? Who are those superior mortals for whom we are so mightily anxious to secure perfect immunity from all earthly toil? What hardship would there be, what have we to dread in the gradual approach of a social system which should, little by little, force into the ranks of some of these useful workers all who are now living on the work of other people, including a vast number of drones, existing for nothing but to kill time, to pander to their own petty amusements, and often to their highly cultivated vices? If we, as a society, can see our way to the gradual development of a system which will give useful and honourable work to tens of thousands of starving people, will improve the social condition of the whole working-class, and promote the general welfare of the whole community, why should we be deterred for an instant by any consideration for the comparatively small body of people who might possibly at some remote future be compelled, by the ultimate working out of this system, to make themselves useful in the world?

But in fact no reasonable person would be deterred

by any tenderness for the wealthy drones of society if the drones themselves were alone concerned. The truth is, everybody can perceive that these monied idlers are at present among the best patrons of the working community, because they spend money. They buy pictures, and they build houses, and decorate them with the costliest furniture; they set up yachts and carriages, and lay out gardens, and array themselves in clothes of extravagant cost. They make it good for trade. Take away or reduce the incomes they derive from investment and what becomes of your carriage builders and your artists, your cabinetmakers and upholsterers, your tailors and milliners? What becomes of trade?

It altogether depends, of course, upon how you take their incomes away, and what becomes of the incomes when you have taken them. If you simply destroy their incomes—if you take wealth and throw it into the bottom of the sea, no doubt you will make it bad for all parties concerned. But we have been supposing—just for the sake of illustration—that the public take over the trams, omnibuses, and cabs of London and work them themselves. It is perfectly true that by doing that you will prevent any capitalist making an income out of these services; but those incomes are not destroyed; they are only diverted into other channels. If, in order to reduce the hours of labour, you have taken on 10,000 additional men, part at least of those incomes will go into the pockets of these men, and the rest of it will go into the public exchequer for the relief of rates and taxes, or for public work in some other direction. You divert it

from the pockets of the non-working wealthy, and you have put into the pockets of those who are only too glad to work for it. You do, indeed, make some disturbance of trade. For a time, at least, you alter the character of it, but it is not one whit the less. There is just as much business done, and just as much money spent, but it is spent in a different way and by different people.

For every large, unearned income you thus cut off, you provide a hundred small, well-earned incomes. You stop the production of the luxuries of life in which the one large income would have been spent, and you set going the production of all sorts of comforts and necessities which the hundred small incomes go to provide. At the West End of town there is one person the less who can decorate his gilded saloons with the costliest of furniture, can live on the daintiest of fare, and spend his whole existence in the pursuit of pleasure; and in the East there are a hundred families enabled to provide their one or two rooms with the furniture absolutely essential to comfort and decency, to procure a sufficiency of food, and to enjoy some little daily respite from toil. Now this, I venture to affirm, is precisely what we want—somewhat less ease and luxury in the West, and greater comfort and decency in the East. Do not for a moment let me be understood to undervalue the luxuries of life. We want all the beautiful houses, all the costly works of art we can get to purify and elevate our life's ideals; we want the aid of all the arts and sciences to make this world and all that is in it as beautiful as it can be made. But—but, when

it becomes a question, clear and distinct, shall we, as a community, go on piling up wealth and accumulating magnificence for the benefit of a few at one end of the social scale, while at the other whole masses of people are steeped to the lips in poverty, degradation, and unspeakable wretchedness, then beyond all doubt the answer that we should all of us ring out with earnest emphasis is—"Not if it can be made reasonably clear that it is in human power to prevent it."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES.

LET us honestly face this matter. It is not worth while to disguise the fact that if we take step after step in the direction of public control of the activities of the people, competition among investors of money will become keener, and a good many large incomes will be apt to dwindle and dwindle. A good many people who have spent large incomes freely will find themselves bereft of their power of spending as the result of every step; and there are certain branches of business very likely for a time to experience a certain degree of checking and depression in consequence. You can never exercise the slightest interference in commercial matters without detriment to some section of trade, however desirable and beneficial your action may be in other directions. Bear in mind that, as I have said, the movement will be slow and gradual, but the tendency of that movement for a time will be to check the expansion in the production of all forms of luxury for the wealthy, and to give a great expansion to the production of things in demand by working people, and it may seem, to the superficial observer, that the movement must be a backward one. Society at large may appear to be undergoing a process of deterioration. For instance,

it may be that the building of handsome and luxurious carriages may be checked somewhat. The number of people who can afford such things will not go on increasing and multiplying as they have done of late years. On the other hand, the increase of employment among the working-classes will enable them to ride when they have been compelled to walk, and a great increase in the number of vulgar tramcars and ugly omnibuses may be expected. In a hundred ways the same influence may be perceptible. Artists may experience greater difficulty in finding customers who can give five thousand pounds for a picture, while, on the other hand, the sale of cheap coloured prints for the decoration of working-class homes will be immensely increased. There will be fewer persons who can give a hundred guineas for a pair of window curtains, and a great many more who will think themselves exceedingly smart with a pair at seven and sixpence. It looks as though you are setting up a current antagonistic to all the higher forms of art and manufacture, and you think, it may be, that you have only to carry your current far enough in that direction and all that is artistic and elegant and refined will disappear, and the whole country will become democratised and vulgarised.

You may be quite sure, however, that in the long run you cannot more effectually promote the interests of art and science, and all forms of trade and manufacture, than by promoting the real prosperity of the great masses of the people; and this is true now to an infinitely greater extent than it has ever been before. In all our great towns, at least, there are now edu-

cating, refining, elevating influences at work which are producing an immense effect, and which would exert incalculably greater power, but that so vast a proportion of the population are under conditions of life and labour that entirely exclude them from all participation in them. Churches, chapels, lecture-rooms, reading-rooms, libraries, concert-halls, theatres, public gardens, picture galleries, museums, exhibitions, all have their influence, and together constitute an immense power for the mental and moral progress of the whole community. Give starving families work, give mental ease and a comfortable sense of security to the harassed and worried, and give to the over-worked a reasonable amount of leisure, and in the midst of such forces as we have now at work it will take only a comparatively short time to effect the most marvellous transformation in the whole tone and character of society. Give them full play, and the forces I refer to will produce an immense effect even on the adult population; and if you add to these forces the day and Sunday schools, the evening classes, the institutions such as the Polytechnic, the Birkbeck, the People's Palace, and the thousand and one other institutions for the benefit of the younger part of the population, you form altogether an educational machinery such as the world never saw before. Let anyone go through the metropolis and become fairly well acquainted with what is being done for the mental and moral improvement of young London, and if he possess the smallest modicum of imaginative power to enable him to look a little ahead, he will readily perceive that these "masses," as we are ac-

customed to term the vast majority of our fellow-citizens, are really being rapidly prepared to take the places of these aristocratic idlers, who have hitherto been the best patrons of all that is superior in art and science and manufacture. The evening classes of London would alone be sufficient to rejoice the heart of any but the most hopeless of misanthropes. By the hundred thousand you are turning out young citizens with tastes and aims and characters and accomplishments totally different from anything at all within the conception of the generality of even the well educated among our grandfathers. They are learning music—acquiring just the taste that has put into middle-class homes pianos, and harmoniums, and organs, and has given rise to public concerts which three or four generations ago were absolutely unknown. They are learning to draw and to paint and to model in clay, getting the elements of that art which within the memory of many of us has so transformed middle-class homes, and called into existence a whole world of art industry not even dreamed of at the beginning of the present century. They are deep in the study of botany and chemistry, of astronomy and physiology, and all the sciences which bear on the arts and crafts of life, thus bringing themselves within the range of these mental influences which are as antagonistic to the “tap-room” and all its associations as light is antagonistic to darkness. You are, in short, preparing a population which, if they can only secure fairly favourable conditions of life and labour, will by and by be making demands on art, and science, and trade, and manufacture a thousand times greater than

any you are likely to disturb by putting industry on a broad and healthy footing. By the industrial changes of which we have been speaking, you may possibly have put it out of the power of here and there an individual to pay a couple of guineas for a box at the opera, but among the working population you will have multiplied a hundredfold the number of those who can pay a shilling for a good concert. Which is best, from the broad public point of view, that one man shall be able to drive up in his carriage and pair and pay his couple of guineas for his music, or that a hundred working-men shall ride on a penny 'bus and pay a shilling apiece for that same performance? Which is healthiest for the community? Which promotes the greatest happiness? Which is best for the musical artist, or most likely to promote and encourage musical art? By the changes referred to, you may possibly put it out of the power of an individual here and there to buy a grand piano at two hundred and fifty guineas for his own drawing-room; but for every such case you will have put it in the power of a hundred respectable, intelligent working-class families, by a little care and thrift, to acquire some sort of an instrument for enjoyment in the home. Which is best for the community, for individual happiness, for trading and manufacturing interests, that My Lord Tom Noddy shall patronise the music-shop for a two-hundred-and-fifty-guinea piano, or that a hundred families shall be enabled to spend five, ten, or twenty pounds for an instrument that shall lead the anthem, or the part song, or the children's dance in the home circle when the day's work is over?

Remember that these young people whom on all hands your institutions are training up with artistic and scientific and literary tastes are by and by to become not only the payers of rates and taxes, but the voters, who will control the disposal of them. By social changes you may possibly here and there bring down an unduly big income to a point at which there may be some difficulty in paying five or ten thousand pounds for a picture; but here are these future payers of rates and taxes becoming qualified to understand and appreciate works of art, and to take an intelligent pleasure in them. Slowly, no doubt, but very effectually, you are bringing them in vast numbers over to the public patronage of art and general culture in all its phases and forms. They may never be able to buy expensive pictures for the decoration of their own walls, but, depend upon it, they will soon be voting for local picture galleries, and for the embellishment of their public institutions with the finest works of art they can obtain. By your exhibitions, your art classes and lectures, your cheap books, and your popular illustrated periodicals you take care to cultivate and elevate the taste for art among the people; let them once catch the enthusiasm of the thing, and the public demand on every branch of art will soon counterbalance a hundred times over any curtailment of the purchase of high-class manufactures and art productions by a comparatively small plutocracy—provided only that the people, whose taste you have been cultivating and elevating, can be rendered fairly prosperous. Cultivate the taste of the people, and give them ideas, and give them a fair day's work

and a fair day's pay, and then music, and pictures, and fine buildings, and statues, and noble parks, and gardens, and any other expense demanded for the enrichment of social life will be freely voted and worthily enjoyed. But you cultivate the taste of the people, and quicken their intelligence, and enlarge their ideals of life, and then leave them to fierce and brutal competition, and by your education of them you will but have added a refinement to the cruelty of their lot, and a terrible element of peril to the very existence of society.

No doubt there will be many superior persons who will be vastly amused at the mere idea of the working-classes becoming patrons of the arts and the possessors of pianos in their homes. The bare possibility that a working-man's home may become tasteful and pleasant, and the centre of anything approaching intellectual and cultivated interest must, I know, be utterly incredible to many good souls. There are a great many who take it for granted that between the working-man and their own highly respectable and virtuous selves there is some sort of difference of nature. They speak and think of the "working-class" as of a different order of beings, who, in all matters of taste and intelligence, are and must ever remain on a lower plane of existence. It is not of much use to argue with people dominated by prejudices and antipathies of this kind. Happily, such prejudices are rapidly dying out. By degrees we are all coming to perceive that the difference between class and class is pretty much a difference of circumstances, of opportunities, and general environment. Give the working-classes

—as we are now giving every year more and more abundantly—the same means of education and culture, as are enjoyed by the great middle-class of the country, and secure for them a similar degree of freedom and leisure, and in due time, we may depend upon it, they will occupy, in all matters of taste and intelligence, pretty much the footing that that great middle-class does now.

Just consider for a moment that the working and labouring people of this country are the overwhelming majority of the whole population. Suppose that by any such changes as we have been considering you could, in the course of the next generation or two, lift the whole of that vast mass of population to the present moral and intellectual standpoint of the English lower middle-class. It is very largely a matter of material comfort, and prosperity, and leisure to avail themselves of the moral and intellectual advantages that the times have provided for them. Suppose that you could thus advance the whole of the working-class to about the level of the class just above them, is it not probable that for all the interests of art, and literature, and manufactures, and commerce, you would do more than you could hope to do by doubling or trebling the aristocracy of the country, and that you would do it in an infinitely healthier and a more permanent manner? To a very large extent this has actually been done during the past fifty years. All the best statistical authorities are agreed that the comfortable and prosperous middle-class is larger now than it ever was, and that its character is of a higher type. There is not a doubt

that vast numbers of the lowest class have been absorbed into this more comfortable and prosperous stratum above, and it may be thought that we have only to go on in that same direction, and in due time all will be well. I do not think so, and presently I may tell you why I doubt it. But that some absorption into the lower middle-class from the stratum below has been going on is undeniable, and what has been the result? You have a permanent demand upon every department of social activity quite unprecedented in the history of our civilisation. Whether art of the highest type and in its highest manifestations is, or is not, in a more satisfactory condition now than it has ever been before may be a question. But I imagine no competent authority will dispute for a moment that there is ten times a greater amount of excellent art workmanship in almost every form now in demand for the supply of the lowlier homes of England than there ever was before. On the whole, it may safely be said that art, and science, and literature, trade and manufactures, are far more flourishing now than they ever have been, and that their prosperity is mainly based on the comfortable prosperity of the great middle-class of the community. If this be granted—and I do not see how it can be disputed—then it seems to follow, as a matter of course, that if you wish to promote the general welfare, and to stimulate the production of all that is luxurious in life, the most effectual way to do it in the long run is to make that prosperous, comfortable middle-class as large as you can by absorbing into it as rapidly as you are able all the best of the sad and suffering section beneath it.

CHAPTER IX.

BUT THE SMALL INVESTOR—THE WIDOWS AND WEAKLINGS ?

To get back, then, to the question with which we started—Is there no solid, all-sufficient advantage in having a class in society drawing and spending large incomes entirely without work ? I say that there is not. The wringing out of these large incomes from the labouring masses involves, and always must involve, the literal sacrifice of all the highest interests of those masses, and brings no public benefit which cannot be secured in a thousandfold greater measure by a different system.

But here I can imagine a critical reader putting in an objection. I grant you, he says, that in the social system which permits immense fortunes to be made by investment of money without any sort of personal effort, there is much that is unsatisfactory in many ways. People invest their money and pocket their dividends, and rarely trouble their heads much about the manner in which their dividends are earned. There is undoubtedly much that needs amendment. But then, you know, it is not all investors who make large incomes. What about the small investor—say the widow lady, the aged, the invalid, or the struggling professional men with a small sum of hardly-earned

money invested to eke out a living? Would you put it out of their power to find such investments?

As regards these widows and invalids and struggling professional men and weaklings in general, recollect that those among them who have anything at all to invest are among the most fortunate of a very large class. They are only a small minority of that class. It is quite right to bear in mind the widows whose slender incomes are derived from shares; but it is only fair to remember also the vastly larger number of widows who have no incomes at all but such as they are able to obtain by the work they can clutch in the wild competitive hurly-burly around them. I could, I think, harrow your feelings considerably by a few sample stories of widows and other unfriended women, who, by sheer misfortune, have sunk from comfortable and respectable positions in life, and are at this moment struggling down in the deepest depths without investment, without employment, wasting away, sickening in despair, but hoping and struggling on for the poorest shelter and the hardest crust outside the workhouse—ay, and not a few of them have been plunged into that misery by the mistakes made by themselves or their friends in investing their small fortunes in foolish or fraudulent business enterprises.

Oh! the pitiable tragedies that come of those small investments in mines and inventions and bubble companies and promising follies and swindles of all kinds! In the long run, and taking them all round, these feeble folk, with their little savings, would be vastly better off without the power to become shareholders in grand schemes for wresting out profits

from the blood and sweat of their fellow-creatures; and as for the still feebler folk—the widows and unmarried women, and people generally, who, by physical and mental constitution, are unequal to a struggle with the strongest around them and have no capital at all, God help them! What chance have they in this mad scramble for employment? Lay your strong hand upon the strugglers, restrain their violent eagerness, reduce them to order and system, and in the multifarious requirements of your everyday social life you may find nooks and corners which the weakest of these weaklings may be competent to fill usefully and honourably and happily. But while they are all hustling and battling together, it is the strong and the competent only who can elbow their way to the front—the strong and the competent and the self-asserting, those who are well able to take care of themselves, and are not, perhaps, greatly hindered by any scruples as to their mode of doing it; while the gentle and diffident, the timorous and weak and scrupulous—all whose peculiarities do not quite run in the ways of the world, very admirable and worthy though their peculiarities may sometimes be—all these go down in the struggle by the thousand, and though perhaps they may not often die of actual starvation, they just ebb away. You can see the people dying of mere inanition and broken hearts. And this competitive struggle is the system with which many good Christian people are so supremely satisfied, that if any man, however honest and disinterested he may be, comes forward to declare his belief that it is a bad system and ought to be speedily

superseded by order and control and organisation, they will at once dub him a dangerous and disorderly person who wants to make an income by preaching revolutionary doctrines, and to possess himself of other people's property by overturning society! "It is truly wonderful," says an able anonymous writer, whose words I have just been reading in a current periodical—"it is truly wonderful to a philosophic mind what unanimity of speech and action can be evoked from mankind in favour of what is. No matter how irrational, how inconvenient, how injurious, how flagrantly monstrous even a thing may be, if it is actually existent, and can boast of antiquity, however limited, the whole world will rush to its defence."

What a perplexing phenomenon it is, I have often thought, that Christian preachers and teachers and their churches should, seemingly by instinct, range themselves among the upholders of the system of unrestricted competition—should be the defenders and justifiers of this selfish scramble; while the men whom they dub atheists and infidels and rowdies and demagogues, and I know not what besides, are lifting up their voices all over Europe in vehement demand for orderly and harmonious working in peace and brotherhood, for justice to the poor and oppressed, and for brighter, and healthier, and happier home life. Many a time as I have listened to stump orators in the slums of London—men, some of them very grimy of hand, and, perhaps, a little coarse in language—I have felt the strongest conviction that those men had caught a divine ideal, that they had attained to a

splendid conception of a social cosmos, and that whether they knew it or not, they were really preaching the gospel of the New Testament.

A splendid conception it may be, but it is impracticable, you say. It won't work. Well, if the Christian churches and Christian people generally had really thrashed out the matter, had given their most earnest attention to Socialist proposals, and had sorrowfully found themselves forced to the conviction that they were mistaken, one could understand them. But the real facts are nothing of the kind. Here are whole masses of the population of this country steeped to the lips in misery and degradation, and here is another section of the community rolling in wealth and luxury, and here are earnest men, many of them extremely able men, going out into the highways and byways with fierce denunciations against the continuance of such a state of things and with proposals for its remedy. One would think that all the sympathies of Christian people would at once range themselves on the side of these men—ay, even though they were as grimy of hand and as unpolished of speech as the Apostles of Jesus of Nazareth. One would think that, at least, their sympathies would be with them, even though there might be grave room for doubting their grasp of a difficult subject and the efficacy of their proposed remedies. One would think that everywhere their proposals would be eagerly listened to and earnestly considered, and that men and women, undoubtedly deeply sympathetic with the poor in their sufferings, would not rest until they had got to the bottom of them, and could see just what

was in them. The great majority of even the best and ablest of people apparently never dream of doing this. They won't believe in the practicability of doing away with even the utmost extremes of poverty, and they shrink from any proposals for interfering with the extremest accumulations of wealth. They have indeed a certain undefined conviction that the starving and suffering poor have their moral uses in the world, and that their perpetual existence in our midst was recognised as proper and necessary by Christ Himself. "The poor ye have always with you," said Christ, and this they have twisted into a prophecy. Of course it was nothing of the kind. It was a mere statement of a simple matter of fact at that time and at that place. "Why this waste?" said the carping critics. "This might have been given to the poor." "Never mind," was the reply. "If you are so very anxious about the poor, there are plenty of opportunities for you. You have always the poor with you. You will not have me long." To convert this into a prophetic warrant for nineteenth century Christians, calmly tolerating in their midst social conditions of life which degrade hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children into mere savages, and inflict upon them indescribable wretchedness, seems to me neither more nor less than a blasphemous defamation of Christ's character. Yet not only do good people argue this way, but they dare to believe that the horrible state of things they find in the slums of all the great towns of the kingdom is permitted in order that some flabby sort of virtue called Christian sympathy may be evinced and maintained in mild

activity in the middle and upper classes. Bless their good souls! they are shocked when they hear of the ancient Greeks making their helots drunk in order to promote the virtue of sobriety in their children; but what is that compared with the policy of keeping vast communities of men, women, and children in poverty, degradation, and misery, in order to engender pity and compassion in the souls of the upper ten or the middle-class ten thousand? What a wretched notion is this that it can be any part of the policy of a Divine Fatherhood permanently to keep the lower masses of society in helpless indigence and degradation in order to bring about the play of compassion on one side and gratitude on the other. As though so long as fire burns and water drowns, and friends are parted by distance and by death, while accidents happen and diseases afflict, and men are weak and foolish and erring, there is not likely to be enough sorrow and suffering in a world like this without a little London "slumming" to keep the charitable emotions in healthy play! What would be thought of an English statesman who should deliberately propose that half a million of people at one end of London should be permanently doomed to the utmost extremes of poverty, and all the sorrows and sufferings involved in it, in order that a few thousands at the other end of London should have their sympathies gently tickled into spasmodic activity occasionally? Why, he would be laughed off the stage with the most contemptuous ignominy. And yet, that is precisely the arrangement which good, kindly, God-fearing people are content to regard as an ordinance of Divine

Providence! Why, it often seems to me extremely questionable whether, on the whole, this terrible mass of poverty and suffering does not blunt and destroy more kindly sympathy than it creates by our mere familiarity with it. Of this, at least, I do not entertain a shadow of doubt, that any good it may effect, by quickening sympathy on one side and calling forth gratitude on the other, is counterbalanced a thousand times by the debasing, demoralising influence of extreme poverty on the poor themselves. The rubbish that one sometimes hears about the blessings of poverty is mere cant in which nobody honestly believes. In a position of *comparative* poverty—a position poor and lowly and private as distinguished from the lot of those who are highly placed, and are heavily charged with great wealth and great power, and the responsibilities and temptations which come of such endowments—no doubt there are great advantages. The poor, in that comparative sense, if they only knew what is really good for them, would no doubt often feel profoundly thankful for the peace and pleasantness of their daily path. But for anyone to pretend to believe that there is any good whatever in a state of poverty which compels men and women to herd together like beasts, makes of bright-eyed little children cripples and idiots and permanent invalids from sheer want of good food and wholesome circumstances, and for everybody exposed to it renders life a dull, weary, sordid struggle for mere existence, without decency, without independence, without freedom, without everything that makes life worth living—to pretend to believe that in such poverty there is

any good whatever, except such good as may come from plague, pestilence, and famine, battle, murder, and sudden death, is mere cant and hypocrisy. Nobody does believe in the good of it. Nobody can believe in the good of it. Every living man accustomed to a different fortune would for himself shrink in horror and dismay from such a fate if it appeared to be impending over him. We have no right to persuade ourselves that this sort of poverty is a God-ordained institution for evolving virtue. It is our bounden duty to recognise in it a deadly, desolating influence, ruining men's bodies and souls; it is our bounden duty, earnestly and heartily, to do all that may be done, not only to counteract this influence, but to destroy it.

You can do nothing till you can get the people to work. On a foundation of good, honest labour you may build anything you please. All your labour for the material, moral, and intellectual welfare of the masses will tell, and just in proportion as you labour wisely and well will the advance of your people be rapid. On a foundation of work you can build anything you please. On a foundation of doles and charities and free meals you can build nothing that is worthy of your labour. Make that your foundation, and your whole structure, tier after tier, must be charity, charity, charity, all the way up. Even then you cannot escape Socialism. There is no more socialistic institution imaginable than a modern workhouse. But it is Socialism based on infirmity, incapacity, or vice. It is rotten and diseased and bad. Set the unemployed to work—not in any casual odd-

jobbing, hand-to-mouth fashion, but in a broad, systematic, comprehensive scheme, constructed on an intelligible principle of order and organisation; set the people to work — regular, useful, fairly-paid work—and you will put them on a footing of manly and womanly independence that will enable them to do for themselves many things which you perhaps are labouring to do for them with great difficulty and sore discouragement. They will do much for themselves, and you may be able to work for them and with them in all sorts of ways, for their mental and moral improvement. You may then feel your sympathy drawn out to them without any mingling of contempt, and they may return you gratitude unalloyed by a sense of degradation. Devise some system of getting the people to work while they can work, and when they have fairly done their duty by society, let society give them honourable maintenance. In Heaven's name give, in your social scheme, no place for "small investments" in private commercial enterprise.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF JOBBERY AND CORRUPTION ?

YES, you say, the fundamental importance of work for the unemployed must be quite clear to every reasonable person, and it is equally clear that to some extent, at any rate, it would be possible to do this by public control of some departments of our activity, in which unrestricted competition does undoubtedly work great mischief. But you know a very common objection to such action is that by handing this, that, and other thing to State control, you will be opening up unlimited opportunities for jobbery and corruption.

In thinking over this point in the subject, it would be very desirable to get rid of that idea of "the State." All Europe has laughed over the pompous utterance of King Louis of France, when he exclaimed, "L'etat, c'est moi." It was very ludicrous, no doubt; but to a very great extent it was also very true. The time was, and not so very long ago, when the King really was the State, both in France and England, just as the monarch is now in Russia and Turkey. But the rapid advance of democratic power has totally changed all that, and is changing it from day to day. Only last year Mr. Goschen urged this fact upon the atten-

tion of civil servants. The civil service, he observed, is at present in the position of an establishment that has changed its masters. The old public had been superseded by a new public. The new master, he pointed out, was in many ways more particular, and he entreated civil servants to adapt themselves to the ways of the new master. They should not think the new master fussy, and they must not be too touchy and sensitive. They should not treat the desire for reform which was abroad as a hostile attack on their privileges, to be resented with extreme sensitiveness. In all this Mr. Goschen clearly recognises a change of a most momentous and all-important character in relation to this matter. When the King and his ministers were "the State," then, no doubt, it was to the interest of the community that "the State" should have as little as possible to do with trade and manufacture, and all the multifarious activities of social life. Jobbery and corruption would inevitably prevail. But the monarch is no longer the State. We—you and I—are the State. We have the public service under our control, as we never had before, and that control is being asserted more and more every year we live. I am far from saying that in these services there is no jobbery or corruption. But I do maintain with the utmost confidence, that in the purity of our public service, and the elevation of our standard of public morality, we have made the most gratifying advances within a comparatively recent period. If one wanted to give illustrations of this, the difficulty would be not to find the illustrations, but to determine which to pick out from a bewilder-

ing multiplicity of facts presenting themselves when one comes to look back a little. Take any department of the public service you please, and compare our present standard with that of the time of our grandfathers, and you will probably be startled at the change that has taken place. Take, for instance, the administration of justice. Here in London we sometimes hear complaints that the magistrates are not entirely evenhanded and impartial. But just compare them with their predecessors who were not stipendiaries, but, like the present country magistrates, were supposed to be gentlemen who undertook the administration of justice merely for the honour of the thing, and for the sake of serving the public, though there were certain fees that their office entitled them to. Sir John Fielding says that one of his predecessors boasted of having been astute enough to make a thousand a year out of his berth, and it was well-known that the "honorary" post of magistrate was often very lucrative. How it was managed, we are partly informed by the famous John Townsend, a Bow Street officer, whose shrewd, clear-headed testimony made a profound impression on a parliamentary committee in 1816. He declared emphatically that, "before the Police Bill,"—previous to the year 1792, that is,—justice was all a trading business, and one way in which the magistrates made it pay was "to issue out warrants and take up all the poor devils in the streets, and then there was the bailing them, 2s. 4d., which the magistrate had, and taking up a hundred girls, that would make, at 2s. 4d., £11 13s. 4d. They sent none to gaol, for the bailing them was so

much better." That evidence of Townsend's was indisputably true. Some years before the time of which this witness here speaks, it was discovered that for twenty years a gang of ruffians had made good livings by trumping up charges against innocent persons, and pocketing the considerable pecuniary reward the law at that time allowed informers; and there seems to have been no doubt, that at least some of the London magistrates were well aware of what was going on, and winked at the conviction and execution of innocent persons on the testimony of these wretches, for the sake of the steady inflow of fees they were instrumental in keeping up. So flagrant and bare-faced did the corruption of London magistrates become at one time, that they were commonly known as "basket justices"—those whose "justice" depended on the contents of the baskets with which suitors came to court—and Fielding says that they were never indifferent in a cause but when they could get nothing on either side.

Now what was the cause of this? The simple truth was that the mass of the people had no sort of influence on such matters. Depend upon it they were profoundly conscious of the tragic iniquity of this sort of thing, but they could do nothing to remedy it. Of course the Government of the day were well aware of what went on, but they, and the upper classes generally, could get "justice" that suited their purposes very well whenever they chose to ask for it, and that was all they wanted—obsequious magistrates, who would do the bidding of those in authority, or those who could pay them. As to the mass of the

common people, what they thought of it, or what they wished, was a matter of no great importance to anybody. They had no votes to be used against the Government, and they had no press to influence the opinions of those who had votes. All they could do was now and then to break out in riot, and then they would get shot down in the streets or hanged in rows. How utterly hopeless it must have appeared to the people of these times that jobbery and corruption would ever be so far swept away that the poorest among them could rely on even-handed justice as certainly as the greatest and richest man in London. Perhaps we have not quite attained that even yet. But just imagine, if you can, a suitor for justice going to Mr. Vaughan, or Mr. Bridge, or Mr. Montagu Williams with a present of a couple of ducks, or a sucking pig, or a haunch of venison, to be laid in the magistrate's private room before the case came on! What a refreshing stir there would be in the social atmosphere if My Lord Tom Noddy, having a charge brought against him by a London cabman, should venture to send, on the morning of the trial, a couple of valuable young sporting dogs for which, he had reason to believe, his worship had a special fancy. Why, the very idea of the thing strikes one as ludicrous. London magistrates, even the best of them, are but men, and their justice no doubt is imperfect; but the man who should attempt to obtain a verdict from any one of them by any form of bribery would prove himself little short of an idiot.

Now just put in mental juxtaposition the magisterial bench of Fielding's day and the London magis-

terial bench of our own day, and you have some measure of the advance we have made with our standard of public morality, and in the power of the democracy.

You will find the same progress in whichever way you look. Take our electioneering. We have not, I fear, entirely done with bribery and corruption; but just compare our present standard of what is right and honourable now with the standard everywhere recognised within the memory of many now living. It is really astounding to observe what the best of men were capable of in the old days before the advent of democracy. Few men have ever stood higher in the purity and integrity of their character than the almost saintly Wilberforce. But here is an interesting passage from the life of this good man, who died less than sixty years ago: "His election for Hull cost him eight or nine thousand pounds. After a successful canvass on the spot, he repaired to London, where about 300 Hull freemen resided in the vicinity of the river; these he entertained at supper in the different public-houses of Wapping. . . . By long established custom the single vote of a resident elector was rewarded with a donation of two guineas; four were paid for a plumper; and the expenses of a freeman's journey from London averaged £10 apiece. The letter of the law was not broken because the money was not paid until the last day on which election petitions could be presented."

I am not, of course, quoting this as a flagrant instance of bribery and corruption. The records of the period teem with stories incomparably more

scandalous than this. But the interest of this biographical passage consists in the light it sheds on the public morality of that day. Here is one of the best and the most conscientious men who ever lived feasting his freemen at public-houses and freely bribing them in defiance of the law, which he evades by the simple device of postponing actual payment till after a certain day. What a thorough revolution has been effected in public thought and feeling since the time when even a good man could act in this way without shame or compunction! And pretty much the same change has been effected in every department of public life and activity, and the change is going on probably faster than ever. We have had, and we shall have, a good deal to contend with in the unscrupulous rascality of unfaithful public servants. But with this evil we must grapple just as we have grappled with the roguery of the bench and the corruption of the hustings and the polling booth. By legislative enactment, and by the creation of a healthy and enlightened public sentiment, we must make the breach of official trust and the neglect of official duty as disgraceful as card-sharping or forgery, and undoubtedly we have made in this direction such progress in the past as to afford reasonable ground for the brightest hopes for the future. All the influences and tendencies of the times are dead against evils of this nature. The popular interest in public affairs, the glare of publicity that has begun to flood all the dark corners of official life, the power of the press, and the practical turn that religion has taken during the present generation, are all combining to

render obsolete the objection—undoubtedly at one time seemingly insuperable—that by extending public control of industry you will multiply official posts and open the way for jobbery and corruption. We have now an altogether higher standard of public morality than we had at the beginning of the present century. The statesman who should attempt to carry on Government by Walpole's system of wholesale bribery is an utter impossibility in our day. The public politician who should seriously propose to go back to the corrupt old system of nomination for the civil service, or the purchase of army commissions, would be laughed at as an old fossil. Many men would express the opinion that there was much to be said for the old order of things, but no man who understands the temper of the times would dream of proposing to revert to that old order. A man cannot now more readily commend himself to public favour than by ferreting out some sinecure or job for general denunciation. So strong is the public feeling against all forms and phases of unfaithfulness and mal-administration in public affairs that we seem at times in no little danger of doing the greatest injustice. For thirty years and more we had a Metropolitan Board of Works, which, on the whole, did London splendid service. Two or three of its officers are convicted of corrupt practices, and the whole fabric goes down like a house of cards, and is swept away with contemptuous impatience.

A phenomenon of that kind—and it is only one of a great many that could be mentioned—is not to be regarded as indisputable evidence of universal honesty.

Certainly not. The most corruptible of men are often seen to be the readiest and the loudest to howl down corruption in others. That is by no means peculiar to our own day. But there is another fact which is quite a special feature of our own times, and that is the eminently practical turn which religion has taken. The revelations of geological and biological science, and the results of fearless Biblical criticism, have resulted in an almost complete collapse of dogmatic theology, and in a marvellous development of the sense of practical duty. Progress and reform have come to be the watchwords of Christians and Agnostics alike, and general intelligence and wider views of life have been making it clearer and clearer from year to year that there can be no effectual social reform, no really satisfactory progress, until every man shall learn, honestly and honourably, to do his duty. Men have grown sick of theological controversy, and have joined hands on the common ground of duty and practical effort for the benefit of humanity. Very generally men have come to say with Pope:—

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right,”

—a faith, by the way, which many men may and do hold, even when their own lives are wholly in the wrong.

All the mental and moral and social influences of the age have conspired to create an insatiable demand for a higher standard of public morality, just as powerfully as all the mechanical, scientific, and commercial influences of the times have combined to force men

into great organisations ; and, looking over the whole arena from the providential point of view, I confess that, to my mind, the coincidence of this moral and this material development side by side presents the most startling and significant fact in contemporary human history.

The objection, that by too freely resorting to public and official control and management, you run a great risk of opening ways for jobbery and corruption, is one of which I fully recognise the weight and importance. It is plain and palpable to every candid mind, that without a certain standard of public-spirited rectitude, the socialistic idea could not be carried out with any useful result ; it would indeed very probably result in more evil than it cured. For that reason, if for no other, Socialism has been impracticable in the past. But I hold strongly that on that ground it is impracticable no longer. Our standard of public morality has been immensely raised, our means of scrutiny and control have been enormously developed, and our public methods and system of procedure have been entirely changed of late years. Jobbery and corruption which would have been inevitable and quite ruinous last century are quite impossible in these days of publicity and democratic interest. No doubt it is necessary even now to proceed with great caution and circumspection. If one could conceive the possibility of the nation taking a socialistic craze and running absolutely wild, regardless of all the dictates of ordinary prudence and common sense—if one could conceive of our doing as some Socialists would seem to be advocating, and at

one fell swoop taking over all the railways, and all the mines, and all the shipping, and all the manufactures in the kingdom—then, no doubt, jobbery and corruption would be rampant enough, and probably at no very distant date we should find ourselves over head and ears in troubles far greater than any we had hoped to escape from.

We must go warily and gradually. It must be a growth and not a revolution, and all that I am contending for is, that instead of regarding the public control of the industries of the people as something to be dreaded and avoided and obstructed, we should really look upon it as a goal to which we should push on with all possible speed consistent with safety and prudence. As I began by pointing out, it is not as though the principle I am advocating were entirely new and untried. In many directions we have been forced to adopt it, and I venture to think with the happiest results—where the principle has been applied under what I may call modern conditions. I make this reservation because we have some Government establishments, which may be pointed out as essentially socialistic as to their basis and functions, though it is to be feared that in many ways they are anything but satisfactory. I refer to our Admiralty and War Office, our naval dockyards and arsenals, which have at least the reputation of being centres of gross extravagance, and a great deal of mismanagement, if not of actual corruption. It will generally be found that when people express their objection to any kind of socialistic proposal, by allusions to the lavish expenditure and the loose management of public depart-

ments, they have in mind something that has come to their knowledge in connection with the army and navy supply and equipment.

These departments are of course socialistic, inasmuch as they are public institutions, maintained at the public cost, and are under public control. But it must be remembered that they are not modern creations at all, and they are under public control only in a very indirect and roundabout sense. They are old, and to a great extent still, they are unreformed establishments. Their roots are deep down in the past, and abuses have grown up with them, and have become part and parcel of them. They have never hitherto been much under the influence of democracy, and even if they ever become so, they must always be extremely difficult of management. They are subject to exceptional influences, which every now and again completely override everything. However efficiently and economically Portsmouth dockyard may be managed to-day, to-morrow, let anything approaching a war panic break out, and all considerations of economy of course go to the winds at once. It becomes immediately a point of patriotism to sacrifice everything to speedy preparation, and the whole establishment necessarily becomes more or less demoralised, and will probably remain so long after the panic may have blown over.

Our fighting establishments are, no doubt, Government institutions, and, for aught I know, they may be badly and extravagantly managed. I am not for a moment concerned to repel any such charges against them. They are mere relics of barbarism—fungus

growths of the night, sucking out the life-sap of the social tree; but they are destined to wither away and disappear as the rising sun of intelligence and righteousness smites upon them. They have played their part in the more brutal stage of human evolution, and they have done good service in fostering and developing organising talents, high ideals of duty and devotion, and subjection to discipline. Apparently they have not yet served their full purpose. But the time will come when they have done so, and they and all their scientific devilry will vanish, and the traditions of it all shall be but a bad dream. Meanwhile, though they are a creation of Socialism, it is the Socialism of ruin and destruction, and anything to be inferred from it can have no safe application to the principle of joint harmonious working in the paths of peace and productive industry.

The simple truth is that—apart from the barbarism of war—our social circumstances are altogether new. We can safely and easily undertake now what would have been absolutely impossible a century ago, and it is mere folly to persist in repeating objections that are no longer valid.

CHAPTER XI.

PUBLIC WORK WELL DONE.

It is not to the Admiralty or the War Office or the dockyards and arsenals we should look if we want to judge fairly of what a public establishment may be, and how public work may be done. There are two institutions that always occur to my mind when I look round for an illustration of what may be done by public enterprise. One of them is the Post-Office and the other the Government clothing factory at Pimlico, which, notwithstanding that it is connected with the army, and therefore, of course, quite within the influence of war panics, very admirably illustrates in many ways the advantages of the public control of industry.

If you propose that Government shall do this, that, and the other thing, you are continually being met with the objection that Government work is always badly done, and is always very costly. But the one great civilian experiment of the kind, of course, is the Post-Office, and this is admitted by everybody to have proved so triumphantly successful and satisfactory that again, and again, and again, we have during the past few years enlarged its functions. To letter-carrying we have added the telegraphs, and to the telegraphs parcel-carrying, and to these we have

added the business of a savings bank, of insurance and annuities, and the issue of licenses. By universal agreement, the work, upon the whole, is splendidly managed, and though, no doubt, it would be very foolish for an outsider to say that there is absolutely nothing in connection with it of the nature of jobbery and corruption, it would be at least equally foolish to say that jobbery and corruption are in any appreciable degree characteristic of the department and its work. Broadly speaking, the work is splendidly and honestly and economically done, and everybody admits it, while, curiously enough, with this brilliant socialistic success brought home literally to their very doors every morning, almost everybody seems still to cling to the obsolete idea that public work is bound to be badly and extravagantly performed. If you could conceive of the same thing having been attempted a hundred years ago, it undoubtedly would have been done badly and extravagantly. Imagine if you can that a hundred years ago some preternaturally far-sighted social leader had thought out all the details of our Post-Office organisation, and had predicted that by the close of the nineteenth century every parish of the United Kingdom would have been brought within the scope of it. Suppose he had foretold that the Government of the day would have had a permanent staff of about 64,000 people, besides another 55,000 employed by local postmasters; that in every important village, ever so remote, there would have been a Post-Office official, receiving and distributing letters, post-cards, books, circulars, and newspapers, receiving and paying

cash, and keeping strict account. Imagine that he had foretold that on every country road from Land's End to John o' Groat's messengers would have been jogging along with valuable parcels and orders for money and bags full of letters, many of them containing cheques and banknotes—that altogether the packages thus conveyed would have numbered throughout the kingdom over two thousand five hundred millions in the year; that in addition to all this, this one Government department would have insured the people's lives, and banked their money, and granted annuities, and issued licenses, and over and above it all would have managed a vast and complicated system of telegraphs, largely of its own creation. Why, how simply ridiculous the thing must have seemed to people who knew that the very seats of justice in the metropolis of the empire had only just been purged of the grossest corruption.

If so crazy a prophecy had been made, and anybody had thought it worth while to pay serious attention to it, what a host of objections might have been raised. Just think of the capital you would want. How could it possibly be made to pay? How could you keep the accounts of twenty thousand post-offices dotted about all over the kingdom? Think of the pilfering and peculation you would have to contend with; only consider the patronage you would be placing in the hands of the higher officials; look at the opportunities for jobbery and corruption you would be affording, and of the political power such an organisation would give to those who had control of it. And then how would you manage it? Where would you find your

trustworthy and competent officials? How could the Government, sitting in London, exercise any sort of control in the remote villages of western Ireland or northern Scotland? No, no, the thing is preposterous. If you could make all men honest and disinterested, conscientious and public-spirited, entirely devoted to duty and the public welfare, it might be possible, but so long as human nature is what it is, depend upon it such a fantastic scheme is utterly impracticable.

But here it is, all working so smoothly, and, upon the whole, so satisfactorily, and with so little practical difficulty, that when it is proposed that, in addition to all it has in hand already, the Post-Office shall take over the telephones, or set up a system of express messengers, or of special delivery of letters, the very last thing anybody thinks it necessary to ask is, "Can the department manage it?"

And yet, as I have said, in spite of this practical illustration of what can be done by public organisation, in spite of the fact that we have here one of the most extensive and complicated business systems the world has ever seen most efficiently managed and yielding a profit of three millions a year, people will still go on repeating the dicta of their grandfathers about Government undertakings always being badly and extravagantly performed, and the popularly elected County Council of London cannot propose to acquire a beggarly four or five miles of tramway without raising a storm of indignant protest, and awakening the gravest apprehensions for the future of society. Buy tramways indeed! Why, the next step will be that they will be wanting to work them, and there

will be a pretty opening for jobbery, for patronage, for peculation, and all the rest of it.

The other institution I referred to presents, in one respect at least, an even more striking refutation of this traditional notion that Government work must necessarily be bad and expensive as compared with that of private enterprise. The great Pimlico clothing factory was actually set up because the supply of the British army, by private contractors, was so villainously bad. I have, I think, previously alluded to the fact that up to the time of the Crimean War the practice was for the colonels of regiments to arrange for the clothing of their men. Every colonel received a share of a parliamentary grant proportional to the number of men under his command, and he made his own bargains with contractors. The colonel did the best he could for his country and his men—not, of course, forgetting himself—and screwed down the contract prices to the lowest possible point. The contractors, naturally, counteracted the screwing they were subjected to by screwing down the prices of the materials from which the clothing was to be made to the very utmost limit attainable, and by sweating down the wages of all concerned in the business to the verge of starvation. It must have been somewhere about this time that Tom Hood sang that immortal song of his :—

“ Work, work, work !

My labour never flags ;

And what are its wages ? a bed of straw,

A crust of bread and rags.

“ Oh, but for one short hour,
A respite however brief !
No blessed leisure for love or hope,
But only time for grief ! ”

The whole system, from end to end, was Individualism with a vengeance, and the outcome of it all was that our poor fellows were out there in the Crimea by thousands clad in garments that should have kept them in comfort and decency for twelve months, but which literally fell into rags and tatters after six weeks' wear. Many of my readers will very well remember the outburst of indignation all over the country when it became known that our soldiers were out in the frozen trenches before Sebastopol, many of them with scarcely a rag to cover them, and with boots very largely composed of brown paper. The whole nation was scandalised, and some remedy had to be found. What was the remedy? Further development of Individualism? A more entire dependence on private enterprise? No; it was resolved, after a hurried inquiry, that Government should take the work of clothing the army into its own hands, and to-day if anyone would like to see public and private enterprise sharply contrasted he should go first down into the dreadful little workshop homes in which civilian garments are being made up in the midst of everything that is filthy and wretched and inconvenient, and then into this splendid great factory at Pimlico, where, I suppose, at least 2000 people are working in comfort and with every economical advantage that capital and mechanism can afford them.

Their principal workroom is a sort of miniature Crystal Palace, as I have already observed. Everything is done by machinery. Work is regular and certain; a doctor and dispenser are entirely employed in looking after the health of the operatives, who have a savings bank, and a sick fund, and a burial club established among them, and who get their meals provided on a co-operative system made to yield just a little profit, that, I believe, is devoted to the purpose of sending invalided workers to the sea-side or ministering to their comfort in some other way. For any reasonable person, who knows the conditions of clothing manufacture in London, to look down from the galleries of the great central hall of this establishment, or stroll through its various departments, it is simply impossible to resist the conviction that it would be a great day for London—a day conducive to health and happiness, morality and economy—when all the clothing manufacture for its teeming millions could be carried on upon the system illustrated here.

But the work, the work; how is the work done, and what does it cost? Well, everybody knows that ever since this Pimlico factory has been going the clothing of the army has been first-rate. And as to the cost, it is also very well known that from the outset it was arranged that in order to afford some sort of standard of economy, a small portion of the work should still be given out to contractors, and I believe it has been found quite practicable to keep down the Government factory figures pretty closely to those of private firms. Indeed, it seems really absurd to

suppose that, with honest and fairly competent control, such an establishment as this cannot compete with any other under the sun. The notion that Government work must be badly done and extravagantly costly is beyond all question largely traditional from times when there was little light, little publicity, a very rudimentary sense of public honour and honesty.

But I have heard it said also that Government has always proved itself a hard taskmaster, and that at least its humbler employés have always been treated more oppressively than those of private employers. Of these very departments that I have been alluding to—the Post-Office and the Pimlico factory—complaints of long hours and low wages are by no means unheard of.

Now, I have never minutely inquired into the grounds of these complaints, and, I am bound to say, therefore, that I do not know what justification there may be for them. But I suppose everybody will allow that, whatever may be the faults to be found with these departments, when we shall have brought the poorest of our working population up to their level of comfort and respectability we shall have made a mighty stride forward. If no well-disposed and industrious man in our midst were in any respect worse off than a postman, our social condition would be vastly more satisfactory than it is at present, and if all our seamstresses, tailors, and needleworkers were as regularly and as lucratively and as comfortably employed as are the operatives at Pimlico, it would be a matter for great congratulation. And there is this most important consideration, too. Whatever may be

the condition of postmen and Government seamstresses, that condition is a matter absolutely under the control of the public. Let the public clearly perceive that our letter-carriers are treated unfairly in the matter of pay or of working hours, and the House of Commons may be compelled to put that matter right in a fortnight. But look on the other side of the case : ever since you and I can remember, the "sweating" atrocities going on in the slums of London have outraged the public conscience, and have angered and saddened all humane hearts. We have had Royal Commissions and inquiries and discussions in the public press, and demonstrations in our streets, and denunciations from our pulpits. Statesmen and poets and novelists, and practical philanthropists and journalists, have all addressed themselves to the remedying or the exposure of the evils of sweating, and all of them have been backed up by the strongest possible sentiment. And what has come of it all ? Well, a few of the more respectable and conscientious employers have taken steps for improving the condition of workpeople within the range of their own influence. But the great mass of the "sweating" in all our great centres of industry has been entirely untouched by all our fuming and agitation. Confronted by this great evil, we stand, after five and twenty years of agitation, utterly helpless to deal with it. It may be said, perhaps, that some improvement has been affected in the general condition of many of the victims of the sweating system even apart from the benevolent efforts of particular employers. Possibly there may have been. I think there has. But

how has this improvement been effected? Simply by the passing of Factory Laws and the appointment of Government inspectors. But this is public control. Here you have just the principle of the thing—the conscience and humanity and enlightenment of the whole community asserting its right to regulate the conditions of industry, and all we want is to carry out that principle fully and effectively, so as not merely to mitigate the misery and degradation of an unrestricted scramble down among the masses, but to put an end to the scramble altogether.

For some pages past I have been arguing as though the extension of public control necessarily implied that the “State”—the central Government of the country—would assume control of things. But of course this would not be the case. The Imperial Government would have important functions, but it would certainly be found expedient on many grounds to decentralise, as far as possible, and to let local centres of population manage their own industries. It is obviously quite right that the central Government should be responsible for imperial defence, for the punishment of criminals, for the management of the Post-Office and the telegraphs, because they are not local affairs; but it would as obviously be quite wrong for the central Government to assume control of the tramways and omnibuses and cabs of London, or Birmingham, or Manchester. They are entirely local affairs, and should be managed by the local councils, and whatever departments of activity it might be thought expedient to put under public control, as far as possible it should be the *local* public

control. The function of "the State" with respect to such local affairs would be to see to it that one locality was not in any way prejudicing another, either by any form of competition or by any form of obstruction. It might sometimes be necessary for the State to require local authorities to assume control of industry, and to adopt certain lines of action. For instance, suppose the London County Council were to take over the vehicular traffic of the Metropolis, reduce the hours of the men employed in it, and thus make room for a large body of the unemployed. It is evident that one effect of such action might be to bring into the Metropolis all the unemployed and the dissatisfied from all corners of the kingdom. Even to announce the intention of such action might bring a very formidable influx of unemployed and destitute people into London. Whenever the County Council comes to consider this subject, with a view to giving Londoners a thoroughly good service of vehicles, and improving the condition of the tens of thousands employed in it—and we all know they have already taken one step in this direction—this difficulty will have to be faced, and the aid of the central Government will have to be invoked. The obvious way of dealing with the matter will be to set up counter attractions in other parts of the kingdom, and probably the best way of doing this, when London has definitely resolved to have control of its vehicles, will be for Government to call upon all the towns in the kingdom, having over a certain population, to do the same, to adopt the same hours of labour, and the same scale of pay, leaving all the details and all the management

to local authorities. This would prevent any rush on London, and throughout the kingdom it would give employment to the unemployed, and thus send a new life current through every great centre of population. One large experiment of this kind might be sufficient for some years, during which experience would be gained, and the public would acquire confidence in the merits of public control as compared with private enterprise.

Localise all effort of this kind as far as possible, and invoke the interference of "the State" only where it is indispensable, and you minimise the chances of jobbery and corruption by keeping industrial concerns within manageable proportions, and under the eye of those most deeply and most directly concerned in them.

CHAPTER XII.

WILL IT EXTINGUISH "ENTERPRISE"?

I HAVE, I think, now touched on most of the more common objections to the advance of public control, and if I have not succeeded in carrying to the mind of the reader a conviction of the salutary and beneficent character of the movement, I have, at least, I hope, been able to show that those of us who avow our adherence to the principle are not to be regarded as necessarily actuated by a mere turbulent desire for change, by any mere evil-spirited disposition to level down, or even by the mere rancour of ignorance. The principle we advocate we take to be the principle of law and order and harmony, working beneficially, not for one class only, but for all classes; promoting everything that is highest and best and purest in life.

There yet remain, however, one or two points of some importance to which I think it would be well to give some little attention. To Englishmen, more perhaps than to any people under the sun, the ideas which we commonly express by "push" and "pluck" and "enterprise," is a very favourite and fascinating one. We are great admirers of the man who begins life with nothing at all and fights his way upwards to commercial fortune and social prominence. Such a

man seems to be the very embodiment of the individualist principle, and so much of English prosperity and power is quite manifestly due to such men, that very wisely people generally distrust any movement which seems likely either to limit the sphere open to them, or to weaken any of the influences tending to produce them. And that same feeling with respect to individual men is very largely entertained with respect to all bodies of men given to any form of commercial undertaking. The daring, the persistence, the vigour of English trade are our especial pride, and that our railways, our shipping, our mining and manufactures are all the outcomes of private adventure is, undoubtedly, a fact of which we have great reason to be proud. It is indisputable evidence that, as a people, we have great and masterful qualities, that we are bold, energetic, self-reliant, mentally and physically, vigorous, and pushing.

Now, he would be only a shallow-pated philosopher who should endeavour in the slightest degree to disparage or make light of the value of these qualities of mind and body. It is quite true that our commercial enterprise in the past has been characterised by much that it is very shocking to look back upon, to say nothing of what is going on at the present time. As everybody knows, there are passages in the history of our Indian Empire, the greatest of all our commercial adventures, that make one positively ashamed of his species, and there are features of our industrial rivalry with Ireland that cannot but make any honest reader of the history of that unhappy country burn with indignation. The condition of the

labouring and manufacturing population of Lancashire, and of the mining districts at the beginning of this century, can never be looked back upon by respectable Englishmen without shame; and, indeed, one cannot look very closely into the conditions of much of the industry around us at this moment without getting sick at heart and feeling a strong disposition to denounce commerce as altogether cruel, and unjust, and infamous.

But, after all, this phase of commercial affairs in England is but a very partial one, and there are other characteristics of it all that have justly made England the admiration of the world, and have put the English race foremost among the nations, and if we are to continue to hold our position there it will be only by the exercise of the same self-reliance and vigour, the same indomitable energy, the same boldness of enterprise that have borne us to the front. It would be a fatal mistake to do anything calculated to impair these qualities in Englishmen.

But really nobody proposes to do anything of the kind. From much of the criticism with which the advocates of collective effort are met, it might be imagined that they were proposing that some outside power should come and do for Englishmen what the Jesuits did for the inhabitants of Paraguay in the last century. The reader possibly may know nothing of this remarkable experiment of the Jesuits. It is worth a brief notice here as an excellent illustration of the absurd notions entertained by many people about the aims and objects of modern Socialism in this country:—The people of Paraguay, when they were

found by the Jesuit missionaries, appear to have been simply gentle savages, living in caves, supplying their wants mainly by the chase, and were very much at the mercy of surrounding tribes. The astute Churchmen found them here far removed from all the disturbing influences of the Old World civilisation, in a land wonderfully fertile, and soon perceived that they were a people naturally docile and amenable to authority. They got a number of them together, supplied them with food and clothes, taught them to construct comfortable little huts, set up a magnificent church, and, above all, drilled and trained them, and showed them how to fortify themselves against their enemies. All this, accompanied by such methods as the Jesuits knew well how to exercise for the impression of the unsophisticated savage, and combined, it is only fair to say, with heroic self-sacrifice whenever needed, soon enabled the missionaries to establish an absolute domination over the simple folk, and they submitted with implicit confidence to the benevolent despotism of their teachers. Their community grew apace and soon became a model of order and regularity. Perfect uniformity was observed in its long comfortable rows of houses, and the small circuit of its little townships afforded every facility for preserving domestic tranquillity, or ensuring a ready defence against outside danger. In every little town there was a great square in the centre, the public resort and the general rendezvous. Upon it were erected a church, a college, an arsenal, stores, workshops, and other public buildings, all under the close and unceasing vigilance of the fathers. The community lived and moved with

the precision of clockwork. The people prayed and toiled and slept by time table; from one duty or employment they passed to another like soldiers changing guard, all equally participating in the changes of the day, each one undergoing his measure of fatigue for the common good.

To have gone into the midst of a savage people, and to have elaborated them into such an organisation of soldiers and skilled craftsmen was indeed a stupendous achievement. Had the Jesuit fathers understood a little better what really makes a man, and had they moreover really wished to make men instead of obedient children of the Church, possibly they might have built up a young State in Paraguay that would have been an enduring centre of civilisation and liberty. The fathers were decidedly too fatherly for that. For a time, however, there seems every reason to believe that the success and prosperity of the community were simply marvellous. Regulated liberty, abundant supplies of all the necessities of life, a pleasant and comfortable house for each family, peace, union, concord everywhere. These were pronounced to be the characteristic features of the "Christian Republic." Charity, sobriety, and calm, peaceful enjoyment of life prevailed universally among the people of Paraguay under the Jesuits. The cultivation of music and dancing, martial processions and tournaments, with prizes for the victors, afforded amusement, and religious pageants on special occasions were provided to satisfy the popular craving for novelty and sensuous enjoyment, and to keep before their eyes symbols of higher ideals. An equal balance

of mind and body was described as the ideal of the Jesuit fathers, and to this ideal they apparently attained to a really marvellous degree. At the end of fifty years their communities numbered 100,000 Indians, and even Voltaire, with all his prejudice against the Church, and all its ways and works, was fain to admit that the "Christian Republic," as it was called, came very near to the triumph of humanity; and to its founders it, of course, appeared to presage the renovation of the world. They had practically solved the great social problem, and nothing was needed but that the nations of Europe should hasten to assimilate their Government to that of the Christian Republic.

Of course it was an entire delusion. A strong and enduring social system can be built up not by a strong government, but only by a strong people. The government of the Jesuits was vigorous and capable enough, but the people were mere children, and when these Catholic missionaries were driven out of the country, the whole thing tumbled to pieces, and that which had seemed a model for the world became only a memory and a warning.

Now this so-called Republic of the Jesuits in South America very nicely illustrates the kind of thing which many persons suppose must inevitably result from subjecting one thing after another to "State" control. The State is to do this, the State is to do that, the State is to do the other thing. We are all going to be drilled, and directed, and managed, and controlled. Nothing will be left to our own enterprise, our own skill and daring, our own pluck and energy. Everything is to be done for us. Just as

the Spanish Jesuits managed the South American Indians, so many appear to think that we shall by and by be managed by "the State," and all the self-reliance, and invention, and enterprise of Englishmen will be lost if somebody does not succeed in stemming this rising tide of Governmental interference.

I suppose, however, that everybody can see that if instead of the foreign Jesuits going into Paraguay and building up this civilisation for them, the people of Paraguay had built it up for themselves—if the whole impulse and enterprise of the thing had come from among these Indians; if they had conceived this higher life, had hammered out their own measures, beaten their own paths, had picked out their own leaders, and developed the whole social system for themselves, the ultimate issue might have been totally different. Whether some small proportion of the people—the leaders and managers among them—had made large private fortunes or not, nobody could have said they were wanting in enterprise or energy, in pluck and spirit, however highly developed their social and industrial organisation might have been.

Now that, of course, is precisely our position. We are not going to bring in Spanish Jesuits, or Russian popes, or Roman cardinals to carry on the development of our social system. We are doing it ourselves, and it is mere folly to suppose that, in a social order, constantly becoming more intricate, more elaborately organised, there will be less demand for every kind of human faculty. The more we organise and systematise, the more indispensably necessary will be the men who can originate, and plan, and arrange, and

direct. No doubt it is true that, as one after another the great industries of the kingdom come under public regulation and management, unscrupulous speculators, mere daring adventurers with other people's money, bubble company promoters, and all the heartless crew of blood-suckers who live upon other people's earnings without themselves ever contributing the value of a brass button to the general wealth—it is true that people of this class may find their sphere of operations greatly reduced. But for honest men of bold conception, of ready initiative, of practical sagacity, and indomitable energy, for men of courage and resource, men of light and leading in all grades of society, depend upon it there will always be abundant opportunity, and the more highly organised society becomes, the greater will be the demand for their special talents.

We talk fine things about business enterprise, and in its highest and best developments it really is worthy of our greatest respect and admiration. The genuine thing is among our most precious national characteristics. It has built our commercial navies and founded our colonies, it has created our railways and developed our trade and manufactures, it has set going our printing press, and at the present moment is preparing another peaceful revolution by means of electricity. Under no circumstances whatever can we afford to impair this great national characteristic—our business enterprise.

But while we accord enthusiastic appreciation of the real thing, let us be careful to distinguish it from the sham and shoddy article so commonly mistaken

for it. Where is the merit of nine-tenths of the "pushing enterprise" of our ordinary shopkeepers for instance? What does it very commonly consist in? Here, within a mile or so of where I am writing, is a very active business neighbourhood. One of its most enterprising tradesmen has just pushed a hand-bill into my letter-box, in which he strongly recommends me to take advantage of his unrivalled assortment of goods which he is disposing of at twenty, thirty, and forty per cent. under cost price. Whether it is true or false that he is doing so, is it satisfactory business? Is it commendable enterprise? If it is true, somebody must be smarting for it or will have to do so. If it is false, here is a prominent tradesman pushing his business by systematic lies.

Within a stone's throw of the establishment of this philanthropic worthy is a large shop, the proprietors of which are trying to lure in customers by a startling display of poor hungry-looking wretches dressed up in fantastic costume, and kept all day long pacing up and down the roadway, with big braggadocio boards on their backs. The object of this bold expenditure is to create an impression, that if the public want certain articles, that is really the only shop they ought to go to. As Mr. Bellamy says, however the wording may vary, the tenor of all these appeals is the same: "Help John Jones, never mind the rest. They are frauds. I, John Jones, am the right one. Buy of me. Employ me. Visit me. Hear me, John Jones; look at me. Make no mistake. John Jones is the man and nobody else. Let the

rest starve, but for God's sake remember John Jones!"

All very admirable, isn't it—neighbourly, generous, just, refined? Of course it may be said that it is all understood, and doesn't really deceive anybody. If so, it only shows that this vulgar bragging and boasting, this crude and repulsive self-assertion is to a large extent as futile and foolish as it is coarse and degrading. But whether it does deceive anybody, or whether it doesn't, there the thing is—mere blatant vulgarity, mere shameless lying; and this is very largely characteristic of what passes for business enterprise. Here is another large shop with its windows choked up with "special lines," and their walls all ablaze with sensational posters. They have bought up the entire stock of a bankrupt, sixty per cent. under cost price, and they are holding a grand sale. Oh, brilliant enterprise! Oh, admirable English spirit! The big house with its ready-money has had the good fortune to find a brother tradesman on his beam ends, and, as one of them elegantly expresses it, there is no damned sentiment in business. They have taken the utmost advantage of him. The poor wretch may go and hang himself, and his creditors may whistle for their money, but here are we, a go-ahead firm, with plenty of cash; we have cleverly snapped up his goods at less than half what they are honestly worth, and if you will only come in and buy, upon our honour as respectable tradesmen, we will share the plunder with you! Everybody knows that something of that kind is quite a common thing, and that it fairly represents

another large proportion of what is called "enterprise." It is not cleverness or skill, it is not industry, it is not perseverance under difficulty, it is not foresight; it is simply the possession of means to take advantage of other people. Here is another large house set up in the midst of this busy neighbourhood, and for a time, at all events, is running away with everybody's custom. Splendid enterprise, a roaring trade, a most unequivocal success! And what is the secret of it all? In the first place, they appear to have abundant capital—which, for aught I know, may have been won in lucky speculation on the turf, as is currently reported to have been the case with another big business almost facing it—they have abundance of capital, they have spent large amounts in puffing and bragging about the cheapness and quality of their goods; and, beyond this, I am assured that their one secret of success is the old dodge of selling under cost price a few articles of which the value is known, and putting on an extra profit upon goods of which the precise value their ordinary customers cannot know. Almost any average business locality will afford numerous instances of a similar resort to a kind of low cunning.

Now, it is not worth while, perhaps, to make too much of this sort of thing. I am very far from saying that trade generally is carried on by such methods, and even those who do adopt them I am not disposed to denounce as rogues or impostors or anything else that is very dreadful. To come fairly up to the standard of morality prevailing around him is, perhaps, as much as can be expected of the average

tradesman, and to puff yourself into notoriety at the expense of your neighbour, to issue sensational and misleading statements about your goods and your prices, to buy in the cheapest market, quite regardless of the circumstances of the man who sells, to delude your customer into the belief that he is getting something cheap, when, if he only knew as much as you do, he would be aware that he is paying rather dearly—all such things are, I know, generally regarded as "business," as mere trade customs; they are recognised and winked at as mere phases of commercial "enterprise," and are in some measure excused by the great and increasing pressure of competition. I am not referring to this mendacious bragging and boasting, this sharp practice and petty deception in any severely censorial spirit. I merely wish to point out how largely this sort of thing enters into what we call the enterprise, the vigour, the pluck, and push, and go of the ordinary successful shopkeeper. Surely we need not be greatly concerned if coming changes should make a clean sweep of it all.

"For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man the wide world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that."

Aye, aye, but not while man stands to man in an attitude of unscrupulous antagonism of lies and petty trickery. All shoddy enterprise this. The real thing—the knowledge of business, the intelligent management, the grasp of details, the power of organisation, the keen eye for improvement in method, the honour-

able dealing that wins confidence, the resourcefulness that is ever ready to devise new plans for public convenience—these are the factors in real business enterprise, and depend upon it these will always find their place and will command their reward, not, it may be, in large fortunes, but in comfort and competency, in assured positions of honour and influence.

CHAPTER XIII.

SMALL SHOPKEEPING.

ANOTHER phase of business enterprise is presented in the small tradesman, the shopkeeper who has not the capital or the qualifications for any very aggressive commercial warfare, but just manages to hold his own and to make some sort of a living. There are tens of thousands of such people in London.

In previous chapters I have endeavoured to show that the changes rapidly coming about are already rendering the position of the small tradesmen more and more difficult, and that eventually they must extinguish him altogether. To many minds this, of course, must seem very deplorable, and, no doubt, there are some respects in which it really is to be deplored. It is always so with great changes, however beneficent they may be upon the whole. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and it is a good wind that blows nobody any ill. A snug, prosperous little business is no doubt an excellent thing, and wherever it exists most of us would probably prefer to let it prosper. Even where small shops are not as thriving as could be wished, it may be said that at least they afford the means of living honestly and respectably. We would rather let them alone. But whatever may be our individual prefer-

ences, these great, sweeping, social forces we have been discussing appear to take little heed of the snug prosperity of the individual. They surge on in stately unconcern towards the common good, not heeding the benefit of this person or of that person, of this class or of that class, but only what is for the real advantage of all.

“Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life.”

No. That which is good for the whole community, worked out to its final issues, will be found to be best for each individual. Clearly it is to the advantage of the community as a whole that all sorts of goods sold in shops—all other things being equal—shall be manufactured and sold at the lowest possible price. The whole drift of things, as I have already endeavoured to show, tends in that direction. Scientific discovery, mechanical invention, the higher social organisation, are all rapidly tending to cheapen production and distribution, and to the curtailment of necessary effort, and the mitigation of drudgery, and though at present much of the advantage of it all is appropriated by the capitalist and the middleman, the ultimate issues of these changes must rectify that also; business will be carried on for the good of all, and this eventually must benefit every individual. Whatever is wasteful, whatever system involves needless burdens, useless drudgery, is irrevocably doomed to extinction.

Now, of course, everybody capable of the least observation must perceive that our system of small shops is ridiculously wasteful in every way, and the time will assuredly come when the idea of a dozen small tradesmen, each incurring all the expenses of a separate establishment, each eager to do the same trade in the same neighbourhood, each studying the same little arts for damaging his rivals and enticing customers into his own little den, each devoting all his time and attention from early morning till late at night, and all the dozen put together doing all day long only as much business as one really well managed house could do between the hours of ten and four—the time will come when all this will be something to be merry over. It will seem so ridiculously short-sighted, so unreflecting and puerile. What is it that these twelve men are doing? What is their part in the great social machine? They are simply distributors. They are mediums between those who produce and those who consume. A certain number of people require to be supplied with a certain quantity of goods, and, speaking generally, if the public can get satisfactorily supplied with what they require, it does not matter at all whether there is one distributor or a dozen. There will be no more goods supplied for having a dozen men all struggling one against the other for the privilege of supplying them. It is quite obvious that to have a dozen of them all scrambling after the business that could be just as well done by one is wasteful in many ways—a waste of superintendence, a waste of time, a waste of shop rent, a waste of incidental expenses, such as gas,

light, and assistance, and perhaps a great deal of sheer waste in the way of advertisements, of no earthly use except to divert trade from one shop to another.

Now clearly the most reasonable and economical way of effecting this distribution of goods would be to set up one first-rate establishment in each neighbourhood; to pick out the most competent of the dozen men and put him in as manager, giving the others, or as many as were required, subordinate positions according to their several special qualifications. With ample capital and thorough organisation, the business would be done more efficiently, more economically, and with far less time and trouble. In such an arrangement there need be no waste of force whatever.

But my reader perhaps doesn't like the look of this at all. The economy of it is evident enough, but it is not all advantage. These twelve were formerly their own masters, now they have all become servants. They have lost their independence, they have given up their liberty. And there is another thing. As independent tradesmen each of them had some sort of a chance of making a fortune; under this arrangement the utmost either of them can ever hope to do is to make a pretty comfortable living, and perhaps to save a little by very careful economy. Their incomes, perhaps, will not be all alike, but the best of them has not the remotest chance of dying a millionaire.

In a previous chapter, and in other connections, I have already discussed these points. What we really

want is not to afford chances for one man in ten thousand to die a millionaire, but for the whole ten thousand to live in a fair degree of comfort and prosperity, and this, as I have again and again insisted on, is really the solution of the social problem that the whole course of events is rapidly bringing about. Just as machinery is everywhere superseding hand labour in production, so the evolution of our social organisation is superseding these small and inefficient methods of distribution. Whether we approve of it or not, this transference of the work both of production and distribution from a large number of small concerns to a small number of large ones is being rapidly effected, not consciously or intentionally by us, but by the pressure of economic forces that it is simply useless to attempt to resist. At present, the public advantage of this is not very obvious; it is not at all commensurate with the anxiety and trouble and even real suffering involved in these changes. A great many persons are thrown out of employment altogether, while the employés of these great concerns work long hours for low wages, and the prices of commodities to the public have not always become very appreciably lower for all the economies effected. This is because the changes we are discussing have not yet worked themselves out to their ultimate issues. Between the actual workers and their real employers, the public, the capitalist still stands to take toll. He is at present the real master of the situation, and to a great extent can dictate the prices the public shall pay for their goods and the working hours and wages of his employés.

But he, though he is unconscious of it, is working steadily on towards his own extinction. He is, as I have already pointed out, working on towards monopoly, and monopoly, when it is finished, bringeth forth public control and a system of distribution compared with which our present small shop system will be referred back to as an amusing illustration of the very rudimentary ideas of social economy prevailing at the close of the nineteenth century.

Looked at from one point of view, much of our shopkeeping presents something of a comedy. There is another point from which too often it will be found to be little short of a tragedy. Look at those twelve men we have been talking about. They are most of them probably men with wives and families and homes dependent upon them; they are hampered by want of capital, continually worried by the vicissitudes of trade, the shifting of population, the risks of credit, the stress of competition, the difficulty of getting in money and of meeting bills. Everybody who knows anything of the smaller businesses of London and all large towns—and small towns, too, for that matter—knows that this is not an inaccurate description of the circumstances under which a large proportion of the trade of the country is carried on—crushing burdens of worry and anxiety, absorbing cares, a wretched waste of life and strength in wrestling with difficulties that, under any rational system of things, ought never to exist, and, with all their care and anxiety and effort, only a very limited proportion of shopkeepers ever rise to an assured and comfortable position. By far the larger part find it an incessant struggle for a bare

living, and the cases in which honest and well-meaning men drop out of the ranks beaten and ruined are so common as to attract little attention. Here and there a small business thrives and grows and becomes a big one. These are the cases that fill the eye and occupy the thoughts when we speak of business enterprise. We soon forget the enterprise that fails and dies out in defeat and life-long ruin. There stands the big business that has grown out of a small one, a monument of what may be done by individual industry and perseverance, courage and skill, energy and good management. But for every signal success like that at least a score of cases may be instanced in which the attempt to embark in shopkeeping has resulted in the melting away of the little capital, the wasting of no small part of a lifetime, the disappointment of all sorts of hopes, in the frustration of all sorts of plans, and in final defeat. But all this leaves no great monument behind. The unsuccessful shopkeeper retires into obscurity, his name is painted off the shop front, and the world scrambles on as though he had never been there. From him it learns no lesson. If the teaching of his experience could be brought home to the public apprehension as effectually as that of the successful trader, the world might soon be brought to alter its estimate of the value of "business enterprise" as a training system for character, and the promotion of the real good to the individual.

CHAPTER XIV.

PIONEERS OF ENTERPRISE.

BUT let us get back for a moment to the larger and bolder phases of English enterprise alluded to in the last chapter but one—that which displays itself in the construction of railways, and water works, great electrical installations and huge factories. Undertakings such as these strike the imagination, and at times profoundly impress us all with a sense of the consummate audacity of the British capitalist and the incalculable benefits he confers on society at large. So manifest is our indebtedness to the private enterprise of the past that it is not surprising that the mere suggestion of anything that looks to be antagonistic to it should, by the generality of people, be scouted as folly. Look, you say, at our vast railway systems, our mining industries, our tremendous iron works, our docks and ships and factories, and a thousand other things. To what do we owe them all? Why, to the grit and pluck and daring, the dogged tenacity and unconquerable determination of English enterprise. There is nothing shoddy about this at all events. It is all as sterling as English sovereigns. Put down this splendid spirit of self-reliance and what are you going to put in the place of it? It is the very main-spring of human progress. Weaken and impair this

mainspring and the social machinery at once begins to slacken its speed; destroy it altogether, and the machinery stops dead.

Well, it is all quite true. But you know in all, or nearly all, our greatest industrial developments nowadays there are two distinct sets of people concerned—those who find the money and those who find the brains. Which of these two sets of people are you talking about? The capitalist and the trader, or the manufacturer in the olden days of small concerns, used to be one and the same person. A man beat out his own path, used his own money, managed his own business, and pocketed his own profits. When in those days people talked about business enterprise and the importance of individualism, they knew exactly what they were talking about. They knew their men and understood their characters, and saw their flourishing businesses, and they knew how much depended upon their resourcefulness and prudence, and knowledge of the world and of trade. In their own petty spheres they were men of might and mettle, and the welfare of the whole community evidently depended on them to a very large extent. But in these modern times “enterprise” has become a totally different thing. Much of it has become, and all of it is becoming, too vast for the individual. It assumes the form of great organisations requiring a combination of capital and a division of labour. “He hath an argosy bound to Tripolis,” says Shylock, “another to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath squandered abroad.” There is the merchant

of the Middle Ages. All these "argosies" he has built with his own money, sent out on his own risk, and upon their fortunes with winds and waves and pirates he stands or falls. If Antonio had lived in England at the present time, he would, perhaps, have been chairman of the P. & O., the head of a Board of Directors whose huge steamships—upwards of fifty of them averaging nearly 4,000 tons each—come and go with the regularity of railway trains, who never think of winds and waves but only of insurance rates and the price of coal, and who are administering funds in which they may have comparatively quite a small share.

Now, it is from those olden times that we have inherited many of our notions about business. We keep on talking just as our forefathers have done, about energy, and industry, and enterprise, and all the rest of the good old copy-book mercantile virtues, and all the time we have in mind pretty much the same thing that our forefathers had. We are apt entirely to overlook the fact that whereas formerly the capitalist was himself the pioneer, the man of enterprise and skill, of daring and determination, he is not necessarily anything of the kind nowadays. Take a railway like the Great Western for instance. You have on the one hand the whole body of shareholders, and on the other you have all those who are engaged, or have been engaged, in the construction and maintenance and management of the line. In which of these two bodies of people do you find the enterprise that so justly excites your admiration? The shareholders, you know, number somewhere

about eighty thousand people—business men, retired army and navy officers, clergymen, invalids, very aged persons, widows, ladies, and even children. To talk of the pluck and vigour, the foresight, the resolution, the enterprise of such a body of people is manifestly absurd. No doubt there are a good many of these shareholders who have never seen the Great Western Railway, and know absolutely nothing about it. Even the original shareholders—those who came forward with their money when the line was first projected—were many of them totally ignorant of the merits of the scheme, and were quite incapable of judging of its practicability. They knew nothing about railway schemes, but they had some money, for which they wanted to find a paying investment, and their lawyers, or their brokers, or their friends, recommended Great Westerns, or they happened to know somebody who had invested in them. A large part of these original shareholders were, of course, mere speculators, who “bought for a rise,” and would have shown just as much “enterprise” in promoting a railway to the moon, if they had seen the smallest chance of “bulling” their shares a little and clearing out at a profit. Attentively examined, much of this fine thing that we are so terribly afraid of damaging proves to be nothing very great, nothing very admirable in any way. It resolves itself simply into an investment of money which promises a good return, and such an investment is quite consistent with the possibility that the investor may have neither pluck nor spirit, nor foresight, nor energy, nor anything else that is respectable. He may be an arrant knave and

a great fool. The whole body of the capitalists concerned in the Great Western might be bought out to-morrow, and no train need be five minutes late in consequence. There would still be left in the concern all the men of "enterprise," and initiative, and "go," all the men of brains, of managing and organising ability. To them it would not matter a farthing whether the shareholders were eighty thousand private individuals or all the people in Great Britain and Ireland. There would still be a Board of Direction, or something corresponding to it; there would still be a chairman, and a general manager, and managers of departments, and superintendents, and engineers, and minor officers; and they would all be actuated by just the same incentives to effort that they are under now. They would still stand in awe of public opinion; they would still have their incomes at stake; they would still have their promotion to look to; they would still be anxious to maintain their reputation for cleverness and capacity; they would still take pride in the efficiency of their departments; and not a few of them, let us hope, would continue to be animated by a sturdy public spirit and a healthy sense of duty to God and their fellowmen, just as many of them are now.

There are in this company nineteen directors, there is a general manager, there are the responsible heads of three great departments, and there is a working-staff of about 45,000 men. My contention is that all the business ability, all the skill and judgment, the circumspection and prudence, all the energy and enterprise for which we need concern ourselves, are to

be found among these actual workers of the line, and not among the eighty thousand shareholders. I am aware, of course, that the shareholders not only find the cash but do exercise a control. They elect the directors, and periodically a small proportion of them—including some very clever men, and some who, to put it mildly, are not very clever—meet together to hear the directors' report, to discuss the interests of their property, to listen to new proposals, and to vote upon them and so forth. Their power is, of course, absolute; but, naturally enough, it is generally exercised under the influence and direction of the very able men, who are the practical managers of the line, and where this influence is resisted and overruled, it will generally be found that the policy acted on is one of mere shortsighted selfishness, and right in the very teeth of public interests. The wisdom of the shareholders is nowadays no more needed than their cash. Their functions can be better performed by public opinion.

"Yes," says the objector, "that is all very true. I can see that so far as the mere management of a railway is concerned it need make no difference whether the proprietary body consists of shareholders or the public. The work to be done would be practically the same, and it would be done by the same people and in pretty much the same way. But that is not quite what one understands by 'enterprise.' It may be true that upon the responsible officers of great systems such as these there is a certain demand for new ideas and improved methods, and a really good, go-ahead sort of man may find ample scope for the

best of his powers in this way. It is clear, too, that whoever may be his masters, his position may be made to depend on his showing that he is equal to the demand made upon him. If a railway manager or the superintendent of a department does not show a capability of moving with the times, he may, of course, find himself superseded, whoever may own the railway. But it is not so clear that the 'enterprise' which conceives and carries out altogether new schemes will be by any means so readily forthcoming. Your Government department never invents anything. It never originates any service, never strikes out a new path, never moves at all if it can possibly help it. Look at the Post-Office. Everybody knows that it has stood right in the way of the development of the telephone service of this country, and only the other day, when a private company set up a boy messenger service, the Postmaster-General stepped in and did his best to put it down. It is true that he raised a hornet's nest about his ears, and that the public insisted that he should either do the business himself or let somebody else; and it is true that when he found that that was the temper of the public he at once set about an express messenger service, and that the thing is now in full working order. But we should never have had it if private enterprise had not led the way. And that is always the case. The fact is, if you take away a man's chance of making a fortune out of a new invention, or a new business, or a new public service, you take away the great incentive to action. Men invent, and discover, and strike out new paths of public usefulness, because they hope

for large rewards. Take away the chance of reward and you take away the mainspring of enterprise."

One continually hears this line of argument insisted on, though it is continually being refuted. As regards the capabilities of Government, I have already endeavoured to show that where industrial enterprise—apart from the naval and military—has been tried it has been attended by the happiest results. It is true, of course, that Government departments have never been given to striking out new paths, pushing into new spheres of activity, or making brilliant inventions. But the simple truth is, that not only have they never been required to do so, but they have always been positively forbidden. The principle that has hitherto dominated governmental conduct in such matters, has been to do as little as possible. "Don't on any account undertake anything new until the public clamour for it becomes irresistible." No statesman, I think, would deny that that has been the general rule obtaining everywhere, and if that is so, how can it possibly be thought surprising that Government departments show a want of enterprise?

The trading public have always been extremely jealous of the least encroachment on the part of Government. A few years ago, the Postmaster-General brought out halfpenny post-cards. Immediately all the manufacturing stationers in the kingdom were up in arms. "The halfpenny is for the postage," they said, "and you are, therefore, charging nothing for the card. You are giving it

away, and while people can get post-cards for nothing they will not buy paper and envelopes as they have been used to do. You are damaging trade." And they compelled the Post-Office to charge sevenpence and eightpence a dozen instead of sixpence. It must be remembered too that no Government department can do anything involving expenditure without the sanction of the Treasury. That is quite right and proper of course; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer is himself answerable to Parliament and the public, and hitherto the predominant public sentiment has been dead against any sort of official activity likely to clash with private enterprise. So long as that is the case it is mere folly to taunt Government departments with being laggards in enterprise. Just reverse that, let it be the general desire of the people at large that as fast as it can prudently be done industry shall be organised on a public system, and that the best Chancellor of the Exchequer is he who most successfully promotes this movement, and this reproach will speedily disappear. I don't positively know how true it is, but at the time that Mr. Raikes was getting unlimited abuse over that boy messenger business to which allusion has just been made, I heard it whispered in a quarter likely to be well informed that it was all totally unmerited on his part. He had all along been anxious to take up this enterprise himself, but he could not get the Treasury to consent to the necessary expenditure. I cannot speak with any certain knowledge of the late Postmaster-General himself in relation to this matter, but I can speak of some of his subordinates more im-

mediately concerned in it, and I know that they were quite prepared to undertake it, and that they chafed a good deal under public criticism, which represented their department as laggard and incompetent and behind the times. Every good public servant naturally takes a pride in the efficiency of his department and can have no greater stimulus than the appreciation of the public he serves. The present Postmaster-General has just announced his new scheme for dealing with the telephones. He points out that the telephone has made less progress in England than in almost any other part of Europe. The reasons he assigns for this appear to be two. In the first place the various telephone companies have nearly all been absorbed into the National Telephone Company, and thus the public have lost the benefit of competition; and in the second place he frankly admits that the Government has had to defend its own telegraph monopoly by imposing such burdensome conditions of license on the telephones as have prevented their development. It has been found that wherever telephones have largely developed, as they have done in some parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, the growth of the telegraphs has been checked. The public revenue has been injured, and *that* is the reason why the telephones have not been allowed to develop as they might and should have done. So far as the Post-Office is responsible for retarding the newer system of electric communication it is not from any incompetency or because a Government cannot keep up with the times. It is attributable simply to the policy of the Treasury.

Government has a big telegraphic business, and it has hitherto been the practice to rely upon the profit of that business for helping out the Chancellor of the Exchequer with his budget. As soon as the public choose to insist on the adoption of a different policy they can do so. In the meantime it is simply foolish to point to these things as warning examples of the incompetency of Government departments to deal with public business. The telegraphs upon the whole are worked splendidly, and when the telephone appeared on the scene the wise thing would have been—instead of first licensing a number of companies to compete with the telegraphs and then imposing, with the license, such terms and conditions as would effectually cripple the competition—the wise thing would have been for the Government to take over the telephone and to develop it themselves. If the thing had been taken in hand with the same spirit and ability that have characterised the working of the telegraphs for the past twenty years, we should by this time have had a system second to none, and we should have had another illustration of what the Post-Office can do. But the old prejudice against the assumption of anything that could be done by private enterprise was allowed to prevail; a compromise was effected, and as the result, we have a telephonic service lagging behind all the civilised world, and an illustration of what the Post-Office *can't* do in the way of keeping up with the times. The unsatisfactory position of the telephone in England is continually being referred to as proving the mischief of putting monopoly into the hands

of Government. What it really does prove is the mistake we made in *not* putting the monopoly of the telephone into the hands of the Government in addition to that of the telegraph.

CHAPTER XV.

INVENTORS AND INVENTIONS.

BUT here another question will be sure to arise in the minds of many readers. "How would you ever be likely to get such things as the telephones you have been talking about, if all the enterprise of a country were parcelled out into so many Government or municipal departments?" "Surely," it will be said, "it cannot be denied that our present competitive, free trade system stimulates invention and calls forth new ideas. Even granting that established activities may with advantage be taken over by the State, or the county, or the municipality, surely the possible gains of private adventure are necessary to initiate these activities and to prompt and encourage mechanical and scientific inventions. If you keep on taking away one after the other, all the chances of the great rewards of successful novelties, what are you going to put in the place of them?"

One may, I suppose, be allowed to watch with a quiet eye the social currents swirling around him, to mark their drift, and to give some of the results of one's musings upon them, without necessarily being required to elaborate a complete system for the universe. As regards the encouragement of invention, I am free to confess that I cannot foresee with any

great confidence what is likely to be the system of the future. But of this I feel the greatest confidence, that some system will have to be devised, and even though it should be but a poor one, it will in all probability be far better than anything we can boast of at present.

That mechanical invention and scientific discovery must on no account be neglected or discouraged, I suppose most intelligent persons will readily agree. Most of us, perhaps, are unconsciously inclined to assume, when we look around on the amazing developments of science and mechanics of late years, that we must surely be approaching something like finality. It is difficult to conceive of the possibility of the indefinite continuance of the progress we have been making of late years. And yet, I suppose, all scientific men will be quite unanimous in affirming that there is not, as yet, the faintest indication of any boundary line beyond which we cannot hope to go. They all agree that we are only just on the threshold of the electric age. What our homes will be, what our daily lives will be, what our occupations will be by the end of another generation no man can predict, but there are unmistakable indications that human life may be absolutely revolutionised. It seems at times as though invention can really do but little more for us, and as though the sphere of the inventor must be contracting. On the contrary, it is widening out beyond the power of imagination to realise. Look at this paragraph from an article in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, by one of our cleverest electrical engineers. He describes a recent discovery by another

electrician, and he proceeds to say:—"Should the application of Mr. Tesla's results ever fulfil the bold dreams of scientific imagination, we shall see a social and political change at least as important as that caused by the railway system or the electric telegraph. Most manual labour will become unnecessary, as unlimited power will be available at every man's hand. Engineering works will be able to be carried out on a far greater scale than has yet been ever contemplated, and doubtless a corresponding era of material prosperity will set in; but whether these dreams are ever fulfilled or not, few who attended Mr. Tesla's lecture will forget the possibilities which seemed to open to their minds when they saw a living man standing in the midst of the electric storm, receive unharmed in his hands flashes of veritable lightning, and waving above his head a tube, through which the very life-blood of creation pulsed in waves of purple fire."

Now, if this were the only testimony of the kind, one might be disposed to dismiss it without serious attention. But such dreams are common to all our leading scientists. So far from our having arrived at finality in invention, they seem all agreed that we are probably only just beginning, and it is obvious, therefore, that the relations between society and its inventors is likely to be one of very great and increasing importance. I do not intend to deal with the matter at any length, much less do I propose to formulate any system for the promotion and reward of inventions in the future. But I may venture to throw out a few suggestions on the subject.

In the first place, it is of course a mistake to suppose

that the hope of making a fortune is the only thing that leads people to invent; and if it were it would be little short of iniquitous to encourage the hope, because it is not realised once in a thousand times. It is notorious that inventions are made by one set of people and the fortunes are pocketed by another. There are, I know, some conspicuous exceptions to this, but comparatively speaking, they are very few. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the infatuated inventor gives the best of his brains, any amount of his time, and very often a great deal more money than he can afford, in bringing out his invention, and then if it is good for anything, the man of business steps in and appropriates whatever is to be made out of it. Very unlucky for the inventor, you say, but all the same the public gets the benefit of the idea. That is true, but it is not the whole truth. The man who has invented one good thing, might, if he found it pay, go on to invent another and another, for inventive talent, like any other, is capable of development by exercise. The inventive faculty is as distinct an endowment, as easily recognisable, and as capable of cultivation and training as the faculty of art or music, and considering its value to the community, we should, if we were wise, take the utmost pains not only to foster and encourage it, but to direct it into the most promising and useful channels. But there can be little doubt that if the experience of all inventors could be canvassed on the point, there would be found to be a general concensus of opinion among those, at least, who are not in the very front rank, that the career of an inventor is one of the most discouraging, harassing, ill-requited lives

that a man of brains can possibly engage in. Under the present system of things the great prizes are so few and far between, and so capriciously and unfairly distributed, that it really is not worth a man's while to compete for them. The hope of making a fortune or even of getting a fair reward is generally a delusive one, and shrewd men soon find that out and drop invention for something more profitable. I have said that it is a mistake to suppose that the hope of making a fortune is the only thing that leads to inventions. Many extremely important ones have been mere happy thoughts—have come, so to speak, quite spontaneously. Others have arisen quite incidentally in the course of scientific or mechanical investigations undertaken for some totally different purpose. Then there are some men in whom the inventive faculty is so strong, that they indulge in it for the mere love of it, just as others pursue music, or mathematics, or art. But even if it were true that the chances of great prizes were the only inducement to invent, it might, I venture to think, still be worth while to sweep them away altogether, if at the same time we could devise some possible plan for publicly recognising and moderately rewarding all inventions of real merit. It is easy to conceive of a plan by which inventive ability would be far more effectually developed and encouraged than by the present hap-hazard system. It is with rewards very much as it is with punishments—certainty is far more important than amount. Petty thefts were common enough when hanging was the penalty. Convictions were comparatively rare and every thief hoped to escape. They might safely have

abolished hanging as the penalty for theft if it could have been made certain that every thief would have been caught and moderately punished. For just the same reasons we need not fear to diminish or even to abolish altogether the chances of making great fortunes by novel inventions, if by any means we can devise a system by which some little honour and a reasonable reward may be secured to every man who benefits the community by his cleverness and ingenuity.

We want, in short, in this matter, as in most others, a more even and equitable distribution of rewards; more of the just and carefully managed apportioning and less of the luck of a promiscuous scramble. Our present system of rewarding inventions is monstrously unfair. One man labours and waits and studies—patents this and patents that, spends his money and his life in pursuing what proves to him a mere will-o'-the-wisp. But all the time he is moving towards some really valuable invention, and if he is not showing the world how the thing he is aiming at can be done, he is at least showing how it can't be—which is very often the actual preliminary to success. Another man comes in, picks up the thing when he has wearily dropped it, takes the full benefit of all his experience and goes in and wins. The history of electricity during the past few years will illustrate that over and over again. Rewards often bear not the smallest proportion to the merit that is supposed to have earned them. For instance, I know an exceedingly clever inventor who has devised a plan for coupling and uncoupling railway trucks. This is a matter of really terrible importance According to

the Board of Trade returns, every day throughout the year on the average, some poor fellow—often enough the father of a young family—is horribly maimed, or crushed to death in the most frightful way. To obviate this dreadful sacrifice of human life every year should be a matter of national concern, and the man who can successfully do it should be entitled to national recognition and substantial reward. Well, this inventor has unquestionably shown how it may be done. By the expenditure of considerable sums of money in models and experiments, he has shown how the necessity for getting between the trucks in coupling and uncoupling may be entirely done away with and all these lives saved. The thing he has produced is inexpensive, and it has been practically tried on more than one railway, and pronounced an unequivocal success. There is no question about that, it is admitted. But the reason why no railway will adopt it is that the various companies are continually interchanging vehicles, and the trucks of collieries and other private owners also run over the railways, and unless they were all built on a uniform plan, and all fitted with this new coupling appliance, there would often be difficulty and inconvenience. By and by the State will, no doubt, acquire the railways, and will work them on a uniform system. New trucks and luggage-vans may be built all on the same lines, and here is the coupling contrivance, which every ten years will save more lives and limbs than have been lost in some of the bloodiest battles of Europe. And what has this inventor got for his philanthropic ingenuity, his anxious experimenting, his loss of time

and money, and all the worry and trouble incidental to an attempt to move the great railway companies in a matter of this sort? Not one penny piece. There still goes on the ghastly procession of the bearers of those crushed and mangled bodies to the dead-house or the hospital, day after day and year after year, and here is the simple but most ingenious contrivance that would stop it. It is quite certain that the time will come when the public conscience will no longer endure this frightful sacrifice, but will peremptorily insist that it shall be stopped, and here are the means ready to hand for doing it. But the inventor gets no reward, nor even thanks, and probably never will do so. But now look at another case. For a century and more scientific men had been experimenting on the best methods of converting iron into steel, and of course had accumulated a great deal of knowledge and experience on the subject. In 1856 Mr. Bessemer, having the full benefit of all this, conceived the happy idea of blowing a stream of cold air into a mass of molten iron, and the problem was solved. That invention made him Sir Henry Bessemer, and gave him an income of over £50,000 a year for twenty years at least, and how much more I cannot say.

Now that a system which thus capriciously gives or withholds rewards is in many ways most mischievous seems beyond dispute. That ninety-nine men shall in return for useful inventions get nothing at all, and that the hundredth shall get almost fabulous wealth, gives to the business of invention much of the feverish and unwholesome excitement of the

lottery or the turf. But the question we are discussing is: Does this haphazard system develop and stimulate inventive enterprise better than any other that could be devised? I say it doesn't. Supposing that the gradual extension of State or Communal enterprise really should be found to have the effect of drying up the springs of invention, would it be possible to devise any public scheme for setting them flowing again? I say that it would. We may not hope to attain ideal justice in these matters, but that it would be quite practicable to devise a system which would afford a much nearer approximation to ideal justice, and would do far more for the healthy and steady development of new ideas than our present barbarous scramble, I am convinced.

I have said that I do not intend to formulate any precise system as likely to be that of the future. The necessity for anything of the kind, in so far as it arises from the advances of collective public enterprise, looks to be a long way off, and future social unfoldings must do much in determining what may be best. But by way of a rough suggestion and illustration, suppose that some such system as this were adopted. A man makes an invention. He gets testimonials from two County Councillors that, on the face of it, it looks to be an idea that may be of public service. He takes these testimonials to a sort of an industrial grand jury, who turn the thing over and hear what he has to say about it, and if they think there is merit in it, will pass him on to a petty jury of experts. These specialists may detect in it some weak point that renders it quite useless. Or they may say,

“Yes; a very good idea; but it has been brought out before. Turn to the register, number 10,700 on page 16 of vol. 27, and you’ll find full particulars. You have undertaken your work without careful inquiry, we can do nothing with it.” In either case, so far as the public is concerned, there is an end of the matter, unless you choose to set up some sort of court of appeal. But the petty jury may say, “Yes, this looks to be a good thing. We take it to be a new and valuable idea. We have sufficient evidence that in one way and another you are fifty pounds out of pocket by what you have done. We at once award you that. But it is impossible to say at present what may come of this. We register the invention and throw it open to the community who will make what use of it they think proper. Come before the court again in six or twelve months’ time and we shall then be in a position to judge of the practical utility of the thing, and will make you an award accordingly.” The thing proves really valuable to the public. There is evidence that it has actually been made use of to such and such an extent. “Yours is a meritorious invention,” say the jury. “You have done the public good service and saved public money. We award you a thousand pounds as a final discharge of all public obligation to you.” Or it may be that the new idea is developing others and its influence is manifestly spreading. “That being the case,” say the jury, “we award you the thousand pounds now, and you may make another application to the court in a year’s or two years’ time for further consideration of your claims.”

Now, by some such system as this nobody might have any chance of fabulous wealth, but every inventor would have a fair chance of a reasonable reward, while the public would have the full and unrestricted benefit of every invention as soon as it was made. You may, if you choose, institute a classification of inventions. A new nutmeg grater may go into class ten, and the maximum total award may be fifty pounds. Sir Henry Bessemer's famous invention which, undoubtedly, has exerted immense influence on railway enterprise, and has revolutionised our iron industry, might be adjudged to the first class with a maximum of fifty thousand pounds, and the new railway coupling, which does not pretend to add materially to the wealth of the country, but merely to save every year a few hundreds of our redundant working-class fathers and husbands from being crushed into pulp or chopped into fragments—this might go, say, into the fourth class with a possible ten thousand pounds. Further than this, you may arrange, if you please, that your jury shall be empowered to say, when occasion arises:—"Here is a man quite evidently endowed very highly with the inventive faculty. Again and again he has been before us with novelties that have not exactly hit any existing public demand, but which are characterised by singular ingenuity and originality. Here is talent of the highest and rarest order, though hitherto it has not been of the money-making order. We cannot award him money for the present public utility of anything he has done, but it is quite conceivable that in course of time one or two of the things he has in-

vented may prove invaluable, and in any case this special faculty of his is well worth encouraging. We recommend him for a first or second or third-class inventorship. This will maintain him and will give him access to public workshops and laboratories and whatever other assistance he may require. The man has genius; in the public interest we will give him free scope." Further still, you may, if you please, institute two or three social orders of honour and dignity to which men may aspire by repeatedly becoming real benefactors of the community in the way of invention and discovery, thus adding to a reasonably well-grounded hope of substantial reward a powerful appeal to honourable ambition.

I am not putting this forth as a practical proposal for adoption; it is merely a crude suggestion by way of illustrating what I mean when I say that even though public assumption of industrial and commercial control should close the ordinary paths into which the inventor has been wont to hurry on to his illusory fortune, it by no means follows that the inventor need be altogether extinguished. On the contrary, I maintain that by some such orderly, reasonable method of dealing with inventions, and the faculty which produces them, you may afford unbounded encouragement to the individual, while to the community at large, you may ensure the perfectly free and immediate use of every new idea that can in any way contribute to the public welfare.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

FROM every point of view and in every righteous interest, there is more to be said for order and system and method, for peace and concord and harmonious working, than there is for the strife and confusion of a mere selfish scramble, and that is the conclusion of the whole matter. And, after all, what is it but the Christian conclusion ?

For nineteen centuries men have been preaching peace, and praying for peace, and proclaiming the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, and now that an era of social and industrial concord really begins to slant its first rosy beams over the hill-tops, many of them are crying off in dismay. Peace if you please, but not to this extreme. Put down competition indeed ! Abolish industrial rivalry, bring all men into harmonious and helpful relations with each other, and how in the world are you going to get along ? Where is your motive power ? What will become of your race of heroes, we used to be asked, if you put down the clash of arms ? Men must fight or they will degenerate into spiritless poltroons. And just in the same way we are assured now that they must exert their strength one against the other if they are to develop characters with any muscle and sinew in them. It is

absolutely necessary that they shall wrestle in competitive strife, and if you don't appeal to their individual self-interest, how are you going to get them to strive? "Blessed are the peacemakers," we remind them, and we point to the fact that the Bible is full of splendid prophetic visions of a time of universal peace even for this poor old world of ours—visions all untroubled by any fear of stagnation and decay. And what the grand old seers of the Bible saw far away in the distance, so clear and so sweet, our own prophets, the modern poets, see actually on the horizon, and they sigh for its speedy advent.

" Ah ! when shall all men's good
Be each man's rule, and universal peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land ? "

But then these prophecies and aspirations are not to be taken too literally. Peace, as distinct from actual war, let us have by all means, but, after all, you know you really must allow a little play for the shelaleh. After all there is a good deal to be said for—

" The good old rule, the simple plan,
That he shall take who has the power
And he shall keep who can. "

Only, of course, let the rule be applied with conscience and moderation.

In urging these inconsistencies I am not suggesting hypocrisy or insincerity. Far from it. The times are perplexing and difficult, and it is not a serious reproach to a man that he cannot readily take in all the aspects of such problems as have lately been

puzzling society. The truth is, that what Christian people have been looking for and working for with intense longing is actually coming about, but in a totally unexpected way. Peace, brotherhood, harmony, mutual help, working for the common good—they have earnestly and honestly desired all these things, and they have expected them to become universal. But they have expected them entirely as the result of supernatural influences, as distinct from the social forces around them. Pentecostal showers, mighty rushing winds of spiritual influence, great religious revivals—these are the things for which they have been eagerly watching, and which have hitherto been regarded as indispensable preliminaries to universal peace and brotherhood. They simply cannot realise the possibility that the providential order of things, as they have understood it, may to a certain extent be reversed, and that instead of the spiritual well-being of the community being preliminary to the well ordering of social affairs, the proper organisation of social and industrial life may be the means of promoting spiritual advance. Accustomed as they have been to an unreal and unhealthy distinction between the natural and the supernatural, they cannot conceive that all the scientific and industrial forces of the times are as really and truly working out providential designs as religious propagandism. They have been wont to sing—

“ God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.”

Yes; the sea and the storm, very likely. They are old institutions, and perfectly orthodox. But that God in His mysterious way should ride in a blaze of electricity, and should lever up the world to higher spiritual levels by mechanical invention—that steam power and the stress of economic forces, the pressure of competition, the growth of joint-stock enterprise, and the very greed and ambition of mercantile men—that God should use these modern and mundane forces for the uplifting of the poor, the emancipation of the oppressed, the calming down of strife, for promoting concord, and unity, and mutual helpfulness—all this has been totally unexpected. The spiritual regeneration of the world has hitherto been held to be the indispensable preliminary to material and social well-being. If there is any teaching in facts, we are being taught that the very reverse of this *may* be the case. In society, as in the individual human life, the two things are, indeed, inseparably associated, and that which men have been looking for as the result of religious revivals, the mysterious rulership of the world is forcing upon us by a necessity for organisation which it is simply impossible for us either to resist or to evade.

Peace, concord, mutual help, a closer union of effort. It is the latest Divine message to a distracted world. It is the latest revelation of Divine will, not this time written in books, or sung by angelic voices from the midnight skies, but plainly indicated by every pulse-throb of the world around, and urged on our acceptance by Almighty power.

Civilised society is entering on a new era, and it

will be well for the Christian Churches to recognise the fact. The few simple religious principles for which it has ever been worth while seriously to contend are precisely now what they ever have been. They have neither changed nor developed. They are steadfast as the everlasting hills. What has changed, and is changing, is the condition of society to which we are called upon to apply them, and it is just because the Christian Churches have failed as yet to apprehend this fact in its full significance that so many of them seem paralysed and impotent. When society was simple and really individualistic—when it was composed of mere units, loosely held together, you could deal with those units. The application of your religion of brotherhood, and charity, was in a sense simple and easy. As an individual you could deal with an individual. But society is no longer simple. It is highly organised and complex. Men are massed in great bodies, made subject to great economic laws that have been slowly gathering force through long centuries. Human brotherhood is precisely what it always has been ; but if you want to make that brotherhood effective for the help and uplifting of your fellow-men, you must totally alter your methods. All around you find your brothers and your sisters living under conditions of life which outrage every sentiment of justice, every feeling of pity, every benevolent instinct within you. You bitterly feel the shame and the scandal of it all, and with a great benevolence in your heart, and the precepts of the New Testament on your lips, you pour out your money by the million. And then comes the social economist

and sternly rebukes you. You may mean well, he says, and in individual cases you may do good, but, upon the whole, you are doing incalculable mischief. You are working wholesale demoralisation among the people, and, by the operation of the plainest of economic laws, your benevolent intentions are entirely thwarted. In the long run, the more you give, the lower will be the rate of wages. You restrict your charity, and set yourself to find the people work. And here again you may do some little good, but the cynical onlooker smiles grimly upon you. It is true, he says, you are finding work for these people, but how are you doing it? You give it to one man simply by taking it from another. And you know that you cannot deny it. Sick of your practically useless struggle, you look round for some fresh opening for these unemployed, and you find that the great swelling tide of humanity has already surged up into every nook and corner. There is not a square yard of the industrial field unoccupied. Turn your benevolent enterprise what way you will, you find yourself baffled and beaten. Your old methods may have been right for the old times of simple social life, but you are confronted by new phenomena, and there you stand in impotent perplexity. It really looks to you, perhaps, as though the world has outgrown your principles.

It has done nothing of the kind. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are as real now as they ever were. Your social obligations are greater because your social ties are closer ; your active philanthropy never was more needed because there never

were such multitudes of men looking to you for help and succour. But the simple truth is that your philanthropy must take a bolder flight and a wider range. Your individual benevolence may still avail to mitigate individual suffering. But if you are to deal with this problem effectively and finally, you must rise to the conception of an organised society in which every man shall have his place and his work. It is a conception that you cannot realise very rapidly, but you must keep it steadily in view, and you must advocate and support every measure that tends to it. Set it before you, and push on towards it, and it will kindle enthusiasm and sustain hope. It will give you strength, and an infinitely peaceful assurance—not that you are working out the solution of this problem, but that you are working in line and in unison with the forces that are doing it. Push on in this direction, and every step you take will make your course plainer, and the ultimate issue more manifestly certain. The people will sooner or later catch your enthusiasm and will go with you. But persist in the ridiculous attitude of those who believe that it is more blessed and Christian to dole out charities to your brother than charitably to put your brother on a footing of independence, and you and your doles will soon be laughed to scorn by all that is manliest and worthiest among the poor themselves. “Not charity, but justice,” is already their watchword, and a closer and closer approximation to justice they will assuredly have with every year that rolls round. Their claims are righteous claims. They are endorsed by infinite wisdom, and they are backed

by omnipotent power. We fuss, and fume, and coin opprobrious names for each other, and wrangle over our petty "laws" as though we were really regulating affairs, but all the while the dread forces of social life keep gathering head, and from time to time, calmly but in overwhelming strength, they surge and thunder along from point to point, putting anarchy to rout, sweeping away injustice, confounding the forces that make for strife and discord, and beating into adamantine solidity the great human fabric.

And while all this is going on under our very eyes, we, forsooth, will be "Individualists!"

APPENDIX.

A CHAPTER WITH THE CRITICS.

THE first edition of this book has been extensively reviewed, and, with very few exceptions, the reviews have been most gratifying. Not only have they embodied some very kind and complimentary things, but they have shown that, on all hands, there is a growing sympathy with the principles for which the book contends.

It is not, however, with the appreciative and laudatory comments that this chapter will have to do, but with a few of the more plausible and debatable objections that have been raised by some of those who have done me the honour of noticing the book.

In one or two cases this honour has been a dubious one. "A London journalist," says the *Conservative National Observer*, "discusses want and wealth, the classes and the masses, the small and large investor, etc. The writer assures us he is not a Socialist; one doubts if even Socialists would be anxious to claim him. He writes fluently, irrelevantly, without any grasp of his theme, or any real comprehension of its difficulties. He is a journalist." And with this lofty air of penetrative sagacity I am dismissed into the limbo of cranks, and the reviewer passes on to the next culprit. It is unfortunate for me that a gentleman of such a

grasp and comprehensiveness of intellect has not condescended to point out what the real difficulties are. I would have sat at his feet in all humility and teachableness. I feel sure, from the very keen and minutely observant way in which he has read my preface, and has found there a statement which, I venture to affirm, nobody else will find, that he could have thrown much light upon this difficult subject.

Another important paper—the *Glasgow Herald*—is not much more flattering than the *National Observer*, though it deals with the book at greater length, and is rather more explicit. “The feeling of the book,” says this critic, “is excellent, the optimism delightful, and the muddleheadedness amazing.” This is really very cruel. Let any reader imagine if he can the drop in the poor author’s feelings of pride and elation when he comes to that wretched third clause. “Feeling excellent; optimism delightful; muddleheadedness amazing!” It is true that a little lower down the reviewer says that there is a wholesome freshness about the author’s style which he finds very attractive; but what is that to a man who has just been told that in attempting to deal with an intricate and difficult social subject he has shown himself amazingly muddleheaded? I am afraid that “delightful optimism” of mine has not helped me with the reviewer at all. If you want to get credit for shrewdness of observation and clear-headedness of thinking, never be optimistic in your views of life and the world about you. Depend upon it, Providence is pretty sure to be making a mess of things, and it is wiser and safer to assume that the world is

going to the bad, and that all the great ideals and glowing hopes that sometimes shed a little glow of warmth and light over this doghole of a world of ours are mere illusions that can deceive nobody of any penetration and clearness of vision.

But what is the muddleheadedness of which the *Glasgow Herald* impeaches me? The only illustration of it to which I can find any allusion in the notice of the book is in connection with the subject of capital. "The author's view of the absorption of industrial enterprise by the State is very confused. Sometimes he speaks of this being accomplished with the aid of capital and sometimes of its being accomplished without." I certainly have nowhere said anything so stupid as that any industrial enterprise can be carried on without capital. No doubt the reviewer means borrowed capital.

Now, it seems to me quite clear that in this matter, a community may do just as an individual may. A tradesman who is doing a profitable business, and who wishes to extend that business, may wait until he has saved up sufficient capital; or, if circumstances render it undesirable to wait, and he is able to take up money, he may think it expedient to borrow and begin at once. Surely a community may do the same. It is a matter of mere detail to be decided by circumstances, and I really cannot see that there is any muddleheadedness in assuming that sometimes it might be best to borrow capital and sometimes best to do without borrowing. The reviewer also refuses to believe that the tendency of the time is to circumscribe and gradually abolish the opportunities for the

investment of money. "It is clear," he says, "that, leaving confiscation out of the reckoning, transference to the nation or the municipality of an industry or a public service means simply the fixation of interest for the money invested in these, not at all the abolition of investment, as our author argues."

Is that really clear to you, Mr. Reviewer? Then supposing the Post Office should presently wish to buy out the existing parcel companies and to assume entire monopoly, they must of necessity borrow the money to do it, and go on paying interest for it for all time. Why must they necessarily do this when their present business already yields them a profit of over three millions a year? Why cannot they do like a prudent tradesman—save up their profits for a few years, and extend their business with their own capital? I shall be told, perhaps, that it would come to the same thing, since the interest on capital and the profits on business would all come out of the public pocket. Very well, if the two things are the same, why should the reviewer assume that, as a matter of course, the public would prefer to borrow capital and pay interest? He gives no reason, and I venture to think he will find it hard to discover any, unless he finds one in the desire of the public to afford opportunities for people to live by investment. But if he knows anything of the drift of public opinion on this point, he knows that it is running strongly in the very opposite direction, and that all over Europe advanced thinkers and radical reformers are not only predicting the end of the capitalist *régime*, but are strenuously working to bring it about.

This same point of objection was urged in the columns of the *Christian World*, which devoted a very able leading article to a discussion of this book, and gave expression to some very out-spoken opinions upon the subject generally :—

“It is certainly a remarkable sign of the times,” says the *Christian World* of the 1st September, 1892, “that thinkers in all parts of the civilised world, observing the drift of things around them, are arriving with more or less unanimity at conclusions of this character. There is no question that society is moving, with ever-accelerating pace, from individualism pure and simple towards some form of collectivism. Men are feeling after a system which shall insure to all humanity, the weak as well as the strong, a share in the general progress. The state of things which secures to the few contentment, luxury, and scope for full development, while leaving the mass very much in the state of the slaves in the old Greek system, must give way to one in which well-being and the possibilities of culture shall be a common heritage. A sentiment is growing which will one day make it impossible for good men to enjoy while others simply endure. The condition of this enjoyment will be that others share in it.

“Going so far with our author,” continues the article, “we are, nevertheless, not able to accept all his conclusions. We do not, for instance, see that the facts and tendencies which he describes point inevitably to the extinction of capitalists, for, in the first place, his system leaves room for the accumulation of

private capital. Under it men will earn incomes, and some of them very large ones. That means capital which would be on the look-out for employment. And, in the second place, it does not in the least follow that the public control of great business systems would exclude the investment of private and interest-bearing capital in them. In proof of this we cannot do better than cite the Bergen method of dealing with the drink traffic. In that flourishing Norwegian seaport the drink trade is in the hands of the civic authorities, who lease it to a private company, regulating the action of that company at all points, with a view to the public well-being, but allowing them to take a profit of five per cent. on the capital they have invested. Here all the conditions of what it is declared will be the ultimate evolution of trade and commerce are present. The private traders have been absorbed into one great monopoly, and that monopoly is under State control. But the system has not extinguished the capitalist."

In reply to this criticism, I addressed a letter to the editor, and he was courteous enough to insert it the following week. With regard to the question of capital, I dealt pretty much as I have done now. "And as it is with capital," the letter proceeded, "so it is with management":—

"A private tradesman may take over a business, and either manage it himself, or he may do as the Bergen people have done—retain proprietorship and general control, but hand over the practical working

of it to a manager, who will bring in capital and take a definite share of the profits as his remuneration. At the present time, and under existing circumstances, the Bergen people very possibly are wiser to adopt this intermediate system, and not at present to push on to a complete and final collectivist development. So long as the capitalist company can serve any public purpose better than the public can serve themselves, why, it would be folly to object to them. But judging by all one sees going on around, sooner or later the time will come when present arrangements will no longer be considered satisfactory. The public of Bergen will go on gaining experience in managing their own affairs. Five per cent. may now be a very reasonable return for investment. But, like all other traders, capitalists will find competition become keener and keener; and sooner or later five per cent. will be considered very high. Bergen will begin to ask itself why it should go on paying year after year £50,000, or whatever five per cent. may come to, for the use of capital that it can do perfectly well without. What the Bergen people have done as regards their beer we here in London have long done in the matter of our water. Practically it has been the same thing. We have granted a monopoly, we have exercised a control, and we have limited dividends. For very many years we were fairly well satisfied; but the profits which were once thought only reasonable, we are now beginning to perceive are exorbitant. The service is by no means all that we can desire, and we are about to take it into our own hands. We shall want capital to do it with, and in all probability

a good many of the water company capitalists will lend us money, but at nothing like the return they have been getting hitherto. For a time, no doubt, this public control of our water supply will, as you say, be quite compatible with the continued usefulness of the capitalist. But that is not the final issue. As London becomes increasingly prosperous and her government increasingly efficient, she will accumulate wealth, and, of course, she will pay off what she owes, just as a prudent and prosperous individual would do.

"But all that is a good way ahead. Depend upon it we need not trouble ourselves about the ultimate fate of the investing capitalist. That he is doomed to eventual extinction there is not a doubt, but it will be a very long and gradual process. He will be let down very gently, and probably to the very last he will be conscious of no greater hardship, or difficulty, or injustice than he is apt to complain of at the present time. Before this change can come about, the whole fabric of society must have been reconstructed, and the opportunities of living upon investments will not disappear till they have been replaced by other opportunities of a far healthier character. We need not trouble about the coming extinction of the investor, except in so far as to assure ourselves that it may be in due time not only a necessary but a right and desirable outcome of the movements of our own day. What we have to do is to put ourselves in line with those movements, and, strong in our trust that the Power behind them is wise and beneficent, to push boldly onward."

A question which several reviewers have raised, as one that presents formidable difficulties in the way of progress, is the question of population. The *Westminster Review*, in a most flattering notice of the book, alludes to this. "It is not for us," remarks the *Westminster*, "to pick holes in a project that we have so much at heart . . . yet he does not grapple with our old bugbear—increase of population; he does not show us how we shall stay that advance with one hand, while we lift up the fallen with the other."

I would fain believe, as the *Westminster Review* is kind enough to say, that "that is, perhaps, the only blot on the book." I did not attempt to deal with the question of population, because, in the first place, it is in itself rather a large subject, and in the next place, the necessity for dealing with it really did not occur to me. Quite early in the book I had distinctly mentioned the increase of population as one of the causes of the tendency to big businesses, centralised organisation, and public control. This, I had said, "is a dominant, overmastering, irresistible tendency of the times, due, in a great measure, at least, to the increase of population, and to the steady march of mechanical invention." It did not occur to me to suppose that anyone would argue that because our people are becoming more and more numerous, therefore it is not advisable to try and organise them. The whole of my book, from beginning to end, was a plea for order, for system, for organisation. It seemed to me too obvious to be worth while pointing out that the larger becomes the population, the more

imperatively necessary that order, that system, that organisation must become. With a couple of hands employed in your business, your method of managing and directing need be nothing very elaborate. Two dozen will require some little system in dealing with them. If you have two thousand, your organisation of their activity will have to be very skilful, and minute, and precise, while a body of two hundred thousand men could not be managed at all except by organising talent of the highest order. All this seems self-evident, and yet, several reviewers twit me with having shirked the population question because it presents a serious objection to collectivist theories. "This growth of population," says one of them, "is no bogus objection, but a very real one." So far from being an objection, the constant and rapid increase of our numbers, is to my mind one of the strongest of all possible reasons why we should hurry on in our endeavours to reduce the swelling throng to order and harmony. If they are to be left to a wild competitive scramble, the larger the throng, the fiercer and the more brutal the strife will become. The thing is too clear to need elucidation.

It may be, however, that this does not quite represent the objection that was in the mind of the *Westminster* reviewer, when he complains that "he doesn't show us how we shall stay that advance with one hand, while we lift up the fallen with the other." The difficulty which presents itself to many minds, may, I imagine, be stated in some such form as this:—"Even with all the poverty that is in our midst, and with all the checks which that poverty affords, our

population increases enormously. If you remove that poverty, the increase will be still greater. Even now we are over-populated; what would be the case, if by any social change the great mass of our toiling and starving poor were lifted to a level of comfort and plenty?"

Within the space at my disposal, I cannot deal with that difficulty at any great length. But I may just indicate the lines upon which I would argue in some detail if I had the space.

In the first place, it appears to me that it has been demonstrated over and over again to be a ridiculous fallacy, to suppose that we are over-populated. There is an appearance of over-population, no doubt, but it is only an appearance, and it is attributable entirely to the unorganised and chaotic condition of our labour market, the pernicious influence of a worn-out land system, and the out-working of a competitive order of things which is fast advancing to its own extinction. Our population is already so large, that in our condition of rabblement and confusion it is embarrassing, and it is increasing with a rapidity which will compel us to put our house in order if nothing else were forcing us to do so. But we are not within a thousand years of anything like serious over-population, and the more rapidly we evolve order out of chaos, the further into the future will the day of over-population recede. This, I believe to be as demonstrable as a proposition in euclid.

If, therefore, it were true, that to render the great mass of our population comfortable and thriving, would be to give an enormous impulse to the increase

of numbers, there would be nothing to fear, provided that this increase of comfort and prosperity were the result of greater social order and higher social mechanism.

But it is not true. No doubt if you were to take the entire labouring population of this kingdom, and bring them by a single step into a condition of ease and comfort and abundance, the increase of your numbers would soon become something appalling. It is the way of mere animal life all creation over. But nobody proposes to do anything of the kind, and if it were proposed, it would manifestly be quite impossible to effect it. Throughout this book I have assumed, and so far as I have observed all rational Socialists assume, that any great organic change in society will be comparatively slow in its advance, and that it will bring with it not merely an increase in beef and pudding, but also a vast expansion of all the means by which men are enabled and impelled to advance out of the animal into the mental and the moral and the spiritual. The minute you begin to evolve in this direction, you bring into play forces that are antagonistic to that reckless increase of which you stand in dread. Nothing can be more illogical and inconsistent than the attitude of many people with regard to this matter. They will tell you that it is the denizens of our slums, the ignorant and degraded labouring classes, who marry earliest, and have the largest families. And if you advocate any social changes likely to lift these classes out of the slums, and make respectable and self-respecting citizens of them, these same good people will oppose you on the ground that

if you do that you will bring about such an increase of population as will quite indefinitely complicate all your social difficulties. Yet one would think that the teaching of experience and the most superficial observation of the world around them would be sufficient to reassure them. Here you have three classes—the upper ten, the middle thousand, the lower million. Broadly speaking, the thousand and ten have never known hunger or want, or serious discomfort or difficulty. Is it they who increase and multiply so alarmingly? No. It is the million doomed to hardship and hunger and to general conditions of life tending to degrade and brutalise them. It is reasonable to infer that if by your social changes you can gradually do away with these debasing conditions, and lift the million to something of the moral and material status of the thousand, you will not increase the tendency to multiply, but rather diminish it. I am well aware that it is a fact based on the most trustworthy statistics that with an advance in general prosperity the marriage rate rises, and that in times of depression and difficulty it falls. But that does not militate against my argument at all. I do not say that, all other things being equal, prosperity and abundance are not more conducive to increase of population than adversity and want. Certainly not. But I do say that if you take a mass of people with little education, with very narrow interests, with an extremely low standard of domestic comfort and merely animal tastes and pleasures, and little by little advance them all along the line, physically, mentally, morally, socially, you may indeed promote a tendency to rapid

multiplication, but at the same time you bring into play forces which in the long run effectually check and counteract it. And I maintain that this is the teaching of all experience of the upper and middle strata of society everywhere.

My answer, then, to this objection, based on the danger of over-population, is that, in the first place, we are not in danger of over-population; and, in the next place, if we were, the most effectual safeguard against it would be to raise the standard of comfort, of respectability, and general intelligence in the largest, the lowest, and the most recklessly prolific section of the people.

The most lengthy and elaborate notice of this book that has come under my observation is in the current number of the *London Quarterly Review*. "An article on 'The Social Horizon,'" says Mr. Stead in the *Review of Reviews* in noticing the contents of the *London Quarterly*, "deals in a gingerly, supercilious fashion with the author of the 'Life in Our Villages' series of letters in the *Daily News*." It does. The fashion is very gingerly and supercilious indeed. I have chosen to issue this book anonymously. The reviewer, with great delicacy of taste, dubs me Mr. Smith, and says that, "The chief interest of this little book lies in the fact that it contains the musings of a man in the street,"—Mr. Smith, you see, the man in the street, under the scrutiny of the Honourable Superphyne Fitznoodle, in his well-appointed library. This modest assumption of vast superiority gives the critic a good start, and enables him to sneer with great effect from beginning to end of his

article. His object, he explains, "is to chronicle the observations and reflections of the average man upon the social movements of the time, rather than" to repeat the wise and weighty utterances which, we are assured, have so frequently appeared in the *Review* on the subject of Socialism.

Now, I have not the least objection to the good old English name of Smith, and it is perfectly true that if I have any qualifications at all for dealing with a subject of this kind, it is because I have been in a very real sense a man in the street—out and about amongst all sorts of people,—as distinct from those superior intelligences who do all their study of social subjects from the depths of an easy-chair, and who never go east of Temple Bar. Nevertheless, this supercilious swagger is very rude and discourteous. I could have submitted uncomplainingly to it, however, if the great man had only bestowed upon me a few crumbs of that wisdom with which he is so bountifully endowed. But his is another of those piercing intellects that can so clearly discern all the difficulties and perplexities by which the social problem is beset, but do not help us a bit in our endeavours to find any way out of them. "The solving of the social riddle," he says, "is not quite so simple a matter as our street philosophers suppose. At our side there lie a dozen volumes, each containing a valuable specific for the evils of our social life. Not one of all their authors seems to have the least conception of the infinite complexity of our social relations, or the faintest fear of evils greater or more widely-spreading, which, if history teaches anything, would be quite certain to

arise were we but 'sensible' enough to try the remedies proposed. But let us keep to Mr. Smith." He, accordingly, proceeds to examine the chapter in which I have attempted to illustrate the principles I advocate by supposing them applied to the vehicles of London.

I cannot minutely follow the learned Mr. Fitznoodle throughout his dissertations on the subject. He sneers and gibes and tries to make it appear that I am incapable of understanding that public rates come out of people's pockets. "In the arcana of the new metaphysics," he grandly says, "a very wonderful distinction has been discovered between 'the rates' and the pockets of the ratepayers." Alas! I understand this branch of the subject only too well. He makes particularly merry over my contention that, for every ten thousand men you can take out of the ranks of the unemployed, and bring into useful and fairly paid work, you set a new life current tingling through every vein of the community. I have actually been ridiculous enough to suggest that the 'busmen and cabmen and trammen of London might be put into comfortable uniforms like policemen and postmen, and that some of the poor struggling and starving seamstresses of the East-End might be employed under comfortable conditions and fairly paid to make these uniforms. Mr. Fitznoodle is very droll over it all. The next thing would be that the seamstresses themselves would be wanting comfortable uniforms, or rather multiforms according to their tastes and needs, and further, model factories would be needed. Really a most appalling possibility! "And then we

should go on to agitate for country cottages for these same seamstresses, and free accommodation in the omnibuses to and from their work." Truly a frightful development! Positively comfortable cottages, either in town or country, for hard-working public servants! "And if seamstresses, why should not every other class of workers be provided for in similar suitable and pleasurable ways?" Why, indeed, Mr. Fitznoodle, as fast as it can be brought about? "But," objects the reviewer, with a fine coruscation of wit, "the swollen veins of the community might burst? They might. What then would happen we are hardly competent to say."

Very incompetent, I should say. And this is the poor stuff which practical people are expected to accept as arguments against movements which they believe to be fraught with incalculable benefits to millions of people. After all the obfuscations of our arm-chair philosopher, what does the matter amount to? Merely to this:—Londoners require a service of public vehicles. I say that the men engaged in it should be paid fairly well, and should have reasonable hours, and that Londoners are quite able to pay whatever it may cost, either directly in fares, or indirectly by a general rate. My facetious critic brings all the resources of his wit and wisdom to prove that if anything so wildly extravagant should be attempted, the heavens would fall, the very pillars of the social fabric would totter, or, at the very least, the public would soon be rushing headlong into bankruptcy. On that point, at least, I am quite content to leave the issue to "street philosophers."

There is one point in this review which may be worth considering for a moment. A passage is quoted in which I have endeavoured to show the ever-increasing tendency to larger schemes and higher organisation, and this at a time when we are only on the threshold of the age of electricity. "What the effect of the new motor will be, no one can foresee," says the reviewer. "For anything Mr. Smith can tell, when force can be stored up and subdivided and transmitted by electricity, the tendency may be reversed or greatly modified. A process of decentralization may set in, and many manufactures may once more be carried on within the little workshop or the home. The villages may become again the scenes of busy industry, and the population be more evenly distributed throughout the land."

That is very well put. I remember hearing, many years ago, the late Rev. Baldwin Brown preach a very eloquent and impressive sermon on the electric power as a new manifestation of Providence, destined perhaps to banish many of the evils of the age of steam. He dwelt very forcibly, I thought at the time, with that very possibility of decentralization and redistribution of the people. Since then, from time to time, I have followed up that idea; but if I were to put some of my thoughts here into print, I should only raise a superior smile on the visage of my scarifier, and give him further occasion to sneer at my well-meant enthusiasm. I will content myself with merely suggesting one or two points for the reviewer's consideration.

In the first place, such a reconstruction as that

which he hints at as possible would necessarily involve enormous central works for the generation of electricity, and these, it could hardly be disputed, would be most advantageously and most economically established by government. In the next place, there would have to be an almost inconceivably extensive and intricate system of electric trunk and branch lines ramifying into every part of the country. This also would certainly have to be under centralized control. Then again, such a manufacturing system could hardly be carried on without a great expansion of our telegraph and postal services, while, for the transmission of raw material and the return of manufactured goods, we could not very well do without a large expansion of our carrying facilities, and a very strict and elaborate system of governmental supervision of such facilities, even if it did not become necessary for the public to assume entire control. And once more, supposing your great factories have been broken up, and small ones dotted about all over the land, and manufactured goods were coming up to our great populous centres from small workshops and cottage homes in every remote corner of the kingdom, how would you stand with regard to the dissemination of infectious diseases without an enormous expansion of public sanitary inspection and control?

Now I venture to affirm that every one of those considerations points unmistakably to a further approximation to a great organic industrial whole, and that any writer who brings forward such a suggestion as this, as an argument in favour of the supposition that the coming age of electricity may after

all lead us back to extreme individualism, cannot have given five minutes' coherent thought to the subject.

There are two good passages in this article of the *London Quarterly* reviewer, and, I think, only two. One is a very admirable quotation from Dr. Dale, with which he finally crushes me, and the other is the opening paragraph, in which he frankly and unreservedly admits that the drift of things is really pretty much as I have represented it. Within his own recollection, something approaching to a revolution in the public mind has taken place upon this subject. He says explicitly that, "the only vital and effective force is that which is urging both the great political parties in the direction of socialistic experiment in legislation, and of a considerable extension of local and central governmental control. Not many years ago, the Manchester School was predominant, and *Laissez faire* the only doctrine heard." And now, "in this country public sentiment, if not completely changed, is changing fast in almost all departments of our social life."

It is really very remarkable, considering that for forty years, as we are told, the *London Quarterly* reviewer has been arguing against it. There is, however, no shutting his eyes to the fact that the men in the street seem to be getting the best of it, but for the life of him he cannot understand it. He appears to be looking down upon it all very much as an anxious hen looks upon the young duckling of her brood when the extraordinary little creature first takes to the water. "In this way," he bemoans, "free-born

Englishmen seem inclined to enslave themselves." But it cannot really be that all those weighty arguments on the other side can have been entirely thrown away; sooner or later they must have their effect. "That there will be a tremendous reaction when the people once begin to feel the yoke, we do not doubt." A reaction against what? "That the fetters are forged and fastened by the people who wear them will not make them less oppressive or galling." What fetters? Are there no fetters now? Is this really a world of perfect freedom? Is there none of the galling of oppression? Is the postmaster-general really so brutally tyrannical and oppressive as compared with other employers in the city? Does this reviewer really wish to persuade us that when the London County Council shall have acquired the few miles of tramway they are preparing to take over, their employ  s, after a short experience of the slavery to which they will be doomed, will rise in a "tremendous reaction" and insist upon being restored to the mild and beneficent rule of the private companies?

Let me tell a little story that I am not sure I have not told in print before. When I first came to London, a good many years ago, I went with a friend to a respectable shop in a middle-class neighbourhood of the West End to get my hair cut. Having been led there once, I continued to go year after year, until little by little the respectable shop became so shabby and mean-looking that I was rather ashamed to go into it. But the man was always very civil and attentive, and I did not like to leave him because he

seemed to be going down in the world, and I kept up my regular visits.

"How long is it since I first came to your shop, Mr. So-and-So?" I asked him one day, as he clipped away at my hair. "Oh, it must be nearly twenty years, sir," he said. "Yes, I think it must. And do you know, I have been thinking that during the whole of that time I have come here on every day in the week except Sunday, and at almost all hours of the day, and I cannot call to mind a single occasion when I have not found you here ready to attend to me. Are you always here?" "Yes, sir, always here. 'Keep your shop, you know, sir, and your shop'll keep you.'" It was with rather a sickly smile he said it, poor man. "What time do you open in the morning?" "Oh, about half-past eight." "And you close at night?" "About nine, except Saturdays, and then it's twelve." "Dear me! what slavery! And do all the hairdressers about here keep these hours?" "Oh, yes, sir; all obliged to do it." "Well, but how absurd of you. Why don't you put your heads together and come to an understanding for shorter hours. If you all did it you would do just as much business." "Oh," said the free-born Englishman, drawing himself up with an air of great independence, "I shouldn't agree to that, sir; I shouldn't allow anybody to dictate to me what time I should open and close my shop. I don't agree with movements of that sort. It seems to me an interference with the liberty of the subject."

I think I went twice more after that memorable declaration of independence, but the second time the

shutters were up ; my hairdresser had gone and left no address. He had probably migrated to some frowsier neighbourhood, where, in addition to his six days of unfettered freedom, he would, no doubt, find the further liberty to open his shop and do a little easy shaving of chins at a penny apiece on a Sunday morning.

Now there, you have the kind of freedom which the *London Quarterly* reviewer and a great many others of our teachers, equally sapient and observant, are dreadfully afraid that Englishmen seem inclined to part with. And they would fain persuade you, that if you were to exchange that system of little competitive shopkeeping for another system by which the public could be served and tradesmen could get a living, and yet have time and ease of heart to enjoy a country stroll on a summer evening, or to attend a lecture or a concert, or a theatre or a picture gallery, or a sermon, or a museum any day they pleased—they would fain persuade you that no sooner should free-born Englishmen discover the real slavery of that kind of thing than there would be “a tremendous reaction,” and everybody would insist upon getting back with all speed to that faultless system of business so strikingly illustrated in the career and collapse of my hairdresser.

I have referred to an admirable passage which the reviewer has quoted from Dr. Dale. Let us reproduce it.

“I do not believe,” says Dr. Dale, “in large schemes for changing the whole order either of our political or economic life. If I am asked to accept a

scheme, and to work for it, which would transfer all the materials and instruments of production to the State, and am assured that only by such a revolutionary method as this can the miseries of considerable masses of the people be removed, I am obliged to reply that the conditions which determine the economical prosperity of nations are so complex, that I have not the confidence and the courage to determine whether such an immense reconstruction would, on the whole, be beneficial; that the equation contains so many unknown quantities, that I cannot solve it; that the greatest and most beneficent improvements in the social and economic condition of nations have not hitherto been the working out of a complete and systematic theory of the true, social, and economic order; that, judging from experience, the destruction of our present organisation and the attempt to reconstruct our economic life on the principles of collectivism, would not work as its promoters anticipate; and that very possibly the evil results would greatly outweigh the good. And if I am told that the Christian faith is irrevocably pledged to the cause of justice and mercy, and that, while the social order is unjust and unmerciful, Christian men are unfaithful to Christ if they do not attempt to reform it, I answer, 'Yes;' but I must first be sure that the new order would be more just and merciful than the old, and that the methods proposed for abolishing the old order, would, at the same time, provide for the secure establishment of the new. And, further, the *first* object of the Christian faith is not to secure justice and mercy in social institu-

tions, but to make Christian men merciful and just."

A wise and weighty utterance. But what have I to do with it? How does it apply to me or my book? Let me quote myself from page 97. "We must go warily. It must be *a growth and not a revolution*, and all that I am contending for is, that instead of regarding the public control of the industries of the people as something to be dreaded, and avoided, and obstructed, we should really look upon it as a goal to which we should push on with all possible speed, consistent with safety and prudence." The book propounds no scheme of mine. I have merely set forth in plain and popular language, a series of perfectly indisputable facts which many abler men than myself have dealt with scientifically, and I have used those facts to show that the power behind all our social phenomena is now, and has been throughout our history, working along certain lines of development, and I have endeavoured to show some reasons for believing that along those lines, and only along those lines, will be found the happiness and prosperity of the people.

THE END.

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